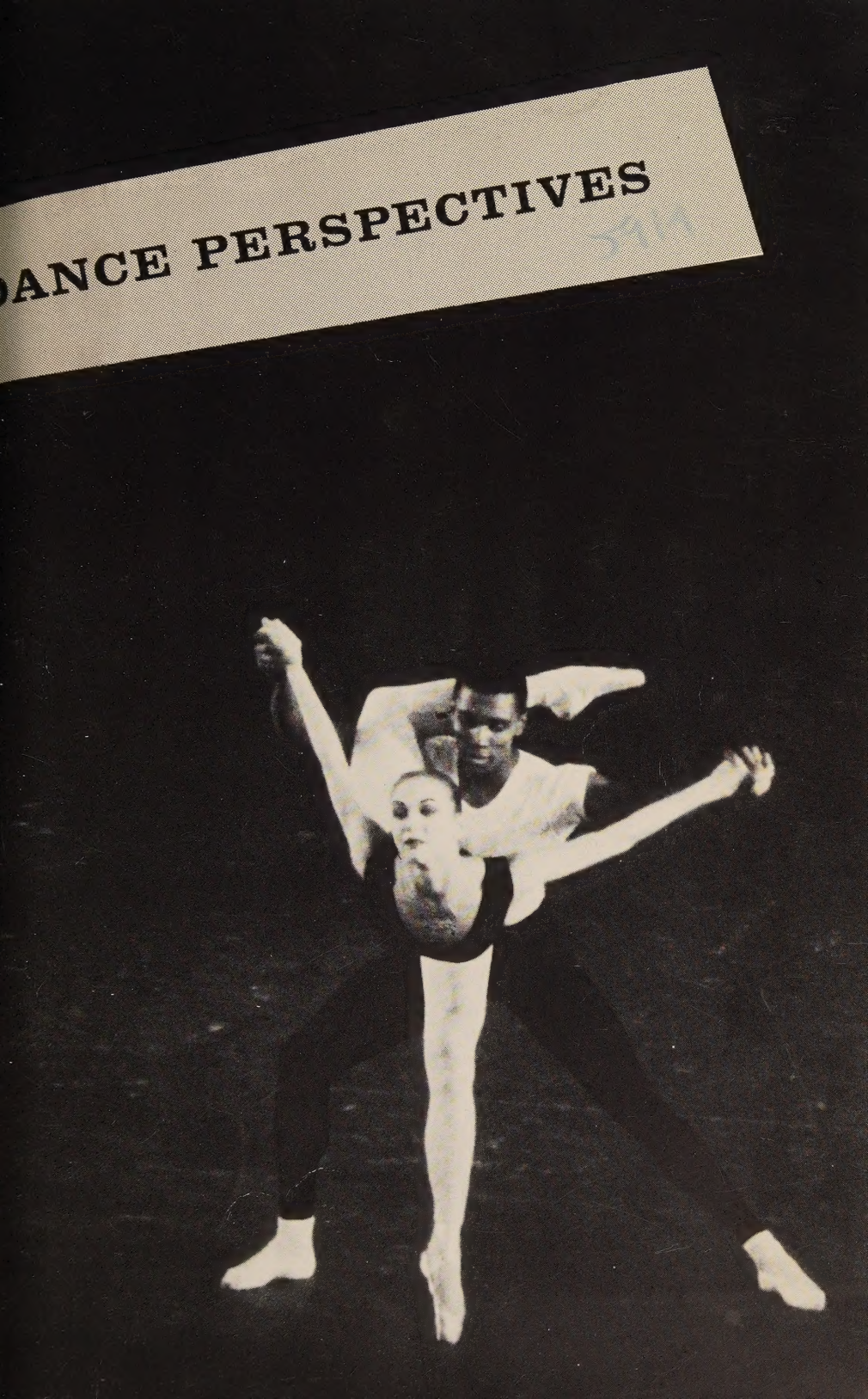
DANCE PERSPECTIVES



DANCE PERSPECTIVES

WHAT BALLET IS ABOUT: An AMERICAN Glossary

by

Lincoln Kirstein

A Portfolio of Photographs
of the New York City Ballet

by

MARTHA SWOPE

Cover designed by Karl Leabo
Allegra Kent and Arthur Mitchell in "Agon"

WINTER 1959

1

Copyright 1958 by Dance Perspectives, Inc., 1801 East 26th Street, Brooklyn 29, N. Y.

Subscription: $5.00 a year. Single copies: $1.50.

DANCE PERSPECTIVES

A. J. PISCHL, Editor
SELMA JEANNE COHEN, Associate Editor
SHEPPARD BLACK, Assistant Editor

IN PERSPECTIVE

A frequently voiced response to the prospectus sent out by DANCE PERSPECTIVES last summer was: "I have been waiting a long time for this." The editors suspected as much. Hence—a new magazine.

We feel that the present is a propitious time. There are now larger audiences for more types of dance of more nations via more media than ever before. And with this increased interest in dance performances has come fresh curiosity about the art of dance.

We believed—and our belief now seems justified—that there is a need for a dance magazine where writers of specialized knowledge and perceptive opinion can publish essays of considerable length. The comprehensive historical or critical article may lack large-scale commercial potential and immediate, obvious practicality. But its audience is growing and its values are lasting. It is informative, stimulating and—why not?—entertaining.

No magazine for such articles has existed in recent years. The situation has not only distressed the many persons who have a vital interest in dance but has also done a disservice to the art itself. Dance possesses a distinguished and fascinating history, a highly developed technique and—since a complete dance work is a composite of several art forms—a challenging aesthetic. It merits freedom and scope for discussion. This is what DANCE PERSPECTIVES will offer.

There could surely be no more appropriate author for this first issue than Lincoln Kirstein, who has devoted so many years to promoting dance both as an art to be interpreted and as a spectacle to be enjoyed. It was Mr. Kirstein's wish that his article should not be illustrated. Consequently, unlike the plan for future issues, the pictures have in this case been grouped as an independent unit. Martha Swope, who is a dancer as well as a photographer, has caught some of the most illuminating moments of *Apollo* and *Agon* for our cover and central portfolio and has also provided our views of the New York City Ballet in rehearsal.

As we begin publication, the editors wish gratefully to acknowledge the assistance and encouragement given them by Edwin Denby, Marian Eames, John Martin, Lillian Moore, Genevieve Oswald, Walter Terry, Thomas G. Veale and Mrs. Allyn S. Wexel.

220680

Lincoln Kirstein

WHAT BALLET IS ABOUT: An AMERICAN Glossary

for Wystan and Chester

Ballet dancing is a form of spectacle now popular to an extent which would have seemed improbable twenty-five years ago. Foreign companies make lucrative tours here. Our own, sponsored by plane-fares from the State Department, are dispatched all over the world as hopeful cultural ambassadors. Ballet at home commands a big and growing public. However, its art and craft are relatively new to the great audience, and ballet has now reached that point of historic development when it must have a popular audience to survive. There are those who, through vagueness or lack of curiosity, permit themselves prejudice against it which precise definition might alleviate. Much of the trouble is semantic. Many terms used to define elements of theatrical dancing overlap. Categories are superficially confusing. Hence, this short glossary for the American audience.

DANCE: Ordered bodily movement accompanied by a regulating percussive or rhythmic beat. A universal human act, it became theatrical or spectacular comparatively late in history. Originally, its designs sprang from rites; its end was social and religious. Its aim was to secure by mimetic action and gesture energy through the schedule of the seasons to gain Great Nature's bounty, conquer enemies, ward off evil, make babies, find food. On the most popular (dance-hall) level it is still communal or playful, done for fun rather than to be looked at, for pay.

Copyright 1958 by Lincoln Kirstein

BALLET: A codified language of exercise, movement and gesture de signed for instruction, transmission and legibility; an ordering o formal patterns covering or filling a limited space. In the West, thi is our opera-house stage floor, and for the efficiency of sight-lines a triangular space, flat-surfaced under the scenery-grid and an are some ten feet above it. The ballet of India, South East Asia, Chin and Japan have even stricter vocabularies, older and more unchang ing forms than Western dancing, calculated to be done in open air temple or palace precincts rather than enclosed theaters with proscen ium arches.

André Levinson says:

> The movement of the oriental dance is concentric. The knees almost instinctively come together and bend, the curved arms embrace the body. Everything is pulled together. Everything converges. The movement of the (western) classic dance, on the other hand, is excentric, the arms and the legs stretch out, freeing themselves from the torso, expanding the chest. The whole region of the dancer's being, body and soul, is dilated.

However, Western ballet, (our academic, traditional, classic the atrical dance), in the last fifty years has become an internationa language, comparable to that of the pianoforte keyboard, and i taught in approximately the same methodology everywhere. It derive from an analysis and codification of folk and social dances in Nort Italy during the early Renaissance. Steps were divided into fast an slow, high and low, to be done in the provinces of earth and air Dominated at first by Milanese masters at the Medici court in th Louvre, it was subsequently developed, organized and amplified b French, Central European and Scandinavian dancers. Russians, Czar ist and Soviet, have had hegemony for the last seventy-five years before, ballet was Italian, French, Viennese and Danish. In ou generation, in England and America, new crops of dancers testify an nually to native independence. Our particular idiom of ballet i the West runs closely parallel to the development of Western music from the sixteenth century dance-suite through the sonata, symphon and tone-poem, with powerful influences from folk-lore, and mor recently from popular dance-music.

Our (Western) ballet is a clear if complex blending of huma

anatomy, solid geometry and acrobatics offered as a symbolic demonstration of manners—the morality of consideration for one human being moving *in time* with another. The visible projection of contact, support and release, of keeping step, shifting pace and weight is framed in styles of movement from the courtier's correctness to the athlete's competitive courtesy in obeying ground-rules. The formal bow (*révérence*), the curtsy (as in the minuet) are simple gestures from imperial protocol, based on mutual respect, expressed in legible physical terms.

The feudal ball-room turned itself into a theater by lifting a platform at one end. This stage, for so it became, was later raked towards footlights and structurally separated from the rest of the enclosure by a baroque picture-frame proscenium arch, locating the spectacle that it held as more elevated, different and apart from the social dancing that was conducted below on the flat parterre or orchestra-floor. A flashier extension of social dancing, ballet soon developed a rationale of readable movement, as well as dancers who were more than amateur performers. Its ultimate aim, building on each successive epoch, has been the most intense projection possible of the human silhouette in plastic action. Ballet has become a means for the extreme release of physical and mental capacity involving measure, melody, memory and money. Through the schooled elegance of skilled muscularity strictly ordered by music, there developed a drama of acrobatic excitement plus a melodrama of hazard dominated. The privy purse of king and courtier provided richness, and competitive ostentation had political employment.

The use of the trained body in field sports tends towards exhaustion in competition, mastering dangerous chances, breaking established records. The use of the dancer's body in ballet is an expression of spectacular skills, endlessly repeated for an unattainable perfection, non-competitive (except towards some metaphysical ideal) which must be coördinated with the behavior of all other performers, stars and soloists, on stage at the same time. It tends, however deviously, towards the state of ritual from which it remotely sprang.

THE BALLET: When people say that they love or they hate THE Ballet, they are usually speaking of a repertory of dance-compositions familiar to them over a five, or at most a twenty-five year period. This repertory is currently in performance of varying efficiency by

touring companies, showing combinations of music, scenic decoration, costume and movement, invested with life by dancing personalities.

THE Ballet is administered by organizations presenting a repertory which may or may not have been created for it, performed by dancers who may or may not have originally created the rôles in which they now appear. THE Russian Ballet, specifically the Diaghilev company, appearing in Western Europe from 1909 to 1929 and in the United States in 1916-17, meant THE Ballet for the first forty years of this century in our hemisphere. Its shadow, or rather the faded pattern of its policy, is still active, but its proper repertory as well as the analytical method which caused it to be born, and the historical necessities which framed it, are no longer vivid. Diaghilev himself was prodigal of novelty. His means were frequently more interesting as paint, poetry, music or personality than as dancing itself. After his departure from Russia by 1913, he was separated from the academic source of a dancer-pool and Western Europe, at that time, provided almost no executants of first quality. Western Europe did, however, provide the Paris School of painters, poets, musicians, dress-makers and an audience which made the city of light the capital of the world. Diaghilev was far less impressed by the importance and lasting powers of his novelties than his heirs; he, unlike them, was always able to find new combinations. His immediate successors chiefly preserved what they could of his. Attempts are now made to endow later revivals of his early repertory with sacrosanct prestige; they are presented with all the authority of a kept canon.

The difference between the ballets of Diaghilev and the accumulated repertory of his epigones was a unique personal predeliction in good taste and in bad taste, and his conviction for serious caprice. His successors had interests in a repertory that could be merchandised. They appropriated his repertory in desuetude as anchor, launching-pad and gilt-edged security. Whole troupes as far flung as Australia and Argentina lived for decades on works which were fresh in quite other circumstances, which did not improve in revival, nor in dilution, nor in a variety of pastiche which was evoked to show something as close as possible to an original without transparent plagiarism. Indeed, close imitation was a sort of abject flattery while here was a workable selling formula in making publics think they'd seen it all before.

A great number of new works equipped with scenery, costumes

and music to some sort of dancing have received first performances since Diaghilev's death in 1929. Three quarters of them have been attempts in one style or another to cash in on the fame of his innovation, but rarely with the focused taste or elevation of collaborative talent which he, for personal and historic reasons, commanded, not as dilletante or impresario, but as a powerful analytical intelligence, operating in the world of lyric theater, as amateur, craftsman, patron and prince.

CLASSIC BALLET: The books say this means ballet opposite to Romantic Ballet, the opposite of Classic Ballet. Romantic ballet is a period designation referring usually to works in a climate established under the influence of the poets Heine, Gautier and E. T. A. Hoffmann in the middle of the last century. It is loosely used to signify ballets in which dramatic pantomime or character-dancing predominated over the school-exercise academic vocabulary. Romantic Ballet today is a category which does not, like the developed classic dance, renew itself. Oddly enough, the archtypical Romantic works (*Giselle, Swan Lake, Coppelia*) are now considered The Classics, and serve as chief tests for the status of international star-style, in spite of an insistent presence of theatricalized folk-dancing and quasi-operatic pantomime.

It is easier to speak of classic style or even of 'classicism' than of Classic Ballet. A classic style may be recognized sooner than it can be defined. It is by no means, like classical sculpture or plaster-casts, frigid, chaste, pure, serene or hard. It can also be warm, bright, soft and sharp, even gay. A true classic dancer is one whose instrument includes the mastery of traditional academic lessons to the degree that a pianist of mettle imposes his own ideas on a keyboard or a fine voice plays with coloratura. In addition to mechanical mastery, the classic dancer embodies a controlled energy towards a perfect delivery of the dance vocabulary, so concentrated, balanced and directed that new dimensions in the realization of steps and combinations of movement are manifest. Presupposing the instrument, an educated body, the distilled energy of the dancer's temperament colors his or her quality as pure pigment stains clear water. Control, concentration and balance in the self, both physical and psychic (control of the ego), combine into that final element which serves both as definition of personality and signature of an epoch. Whether we

have ever seen them or not, we know by analeptic analysis that Taglioni means one date, Pavlova another, Spessiva another. Embodied classicism or peak performance in this kind of equilibrium seems even to repeat itself, identifying main dancers with each other so that there is a dynasty of dancers in being, a sequence of bodies born decades apart who may never have seen each other. What was the classic climate of the Romantic era of 1840 hinted of human loss, decline, wasting-away in waltzes; ethereal persistence of frail soul over proud flesh; love over death.

Our criterion, our classicism (in the American Century) a hundred years after Heine and Hoffmann, is the mastery of the human body over the machine, or the persistence of the body's possibility to move freely despite general dehumanization. Today the dancer's innate metric and musical accompaniment is no longer the sadly or the strongly flowing waltz. Rather, it is measured by syncopated, interrupted, discontinuous rhythms and serial forms; assonant melody and dissonant song. The shapes are abrupt, asymmetrical; movement can even be spastic. Accents are hit with unsuspected or even apparently unrelated emphasis; the correspondence is in their relative placement. Anything can happen, all over the floor or lifted off it, but it happens to an order—anything, that is, (in the classic dance) except the vanity of improvisation. Surprise is our substitute for solemnity, playfulness for fated purpose. Toes have a trip-hammer beat; the whole body finds a piston's pulsation. Sharp, clean, reiterant, hinting at irony even when the atmosphere is lyric, it is the impermanence of mortal performance alongside its chances for ephemeral perfection which is its own subject rather than a narrative explication of fading flowers or distraught innocence. While contemporary classicism, like all dancing, is haunted by the evanescence of energy and the delicate counterpoise in all extremes or opposites of action, it magnifies the meaning of liberty in disciplined dancing, almost while mocking it. The human machine can do as well as an invented machine, or even better, because while it automatically remembers to perform, it thinks during performance. While bodies sweat, machines rust. Balanchine said his *Agon* (Stravinsky, 1957) was a machine that thought; John Martin added that it also smiled.

In *The Trembling of the Veil,* Yeats wrote:

> . . . . . Samuel Butler was the first Englishman to make the discovery, that it is possible to write with great effect without

music, without style, either good or bad, to eliminate from the mind all emotional implication and to prefer plain water to every vintage, so much metropolitan lead and solder to any tendril of the vine. Presently I had a nightmare that I was haunted by a sewing machine, that clicked and shone, but the incredible thing was that the machine smiled, smiled perpetually.

At Versailles, where the classic style as we recognize it in the West received its first framing, chiefly in ball-rooms that were pre-theatrical displays for propaganda purposes, partners were princes in their proud youth. These dancers would one day be kings and queens. On the apex of a social pyramid, dancers moved through the weather of majestic dominance, a gracious and graceful deliberate consideration symbolic of the sovereign's obligation to his realm. Just as imitations or mutations of Versailles appeared in the independent masterpieces of Potsdam, Schönbrunn and Peterhof, the Grand Style of classic court manners took over European operatic dancing. After the French Revolution, when kings started losing their crowns and large urban play-houses replaced intimate court-theaters, princes became disguised as peasant-lads who betrayed real peasant-lasses. The folk-dances of Central Europe and the Mediterranean countries widened the dancer's vocabulary lending freshness and frankness to the fusty court-style.

For our time, the first statement of a 'modern' classicism was presented by Diaghilev for Nijinsky, through a rediscovery of classic Greece, both archaic and Hellenistic, and then through sport (*Jeux*: Debussy-Bakst, 1913). On the eve of the first World War, tango and tennis replaced minuet and waltz and gave us our sportive manner, which has, nevertheless, taken the next forty years to be recognized as our one own really suitable style. Retardative repertories which, ironically enough, have attempted to freeze taste and style in the borrowed plumes of the earliest Diaghilev (who would have hated this more than anyone), try to make the audience believe that THE Ballet and the *Classic* Ballet are one and the same.

The new classicism is classless in essence, although its first expression symbolized a vaguely aristocratic, or at least detached leisure-class, which raced sports-cars and spent week-ends in big country houses or summers in the south of France. The music that was first heard on Petrouchka's barrel-organ developed into the *musiquette* of

Satie's heirs, perforated rolls of the player-piano, mechanical rag-time, loud-speakers and recorded jazz. Machine-music and even the music of the Machine (*Le Pas d'Acier*: Prokoviev-Massine, 1927; *Iron Foundry*: Mossolov-Bolm, 1932) soon became domesticated as an accompaniment of the developed classic dance. As our century advanced, as elegance became more identified with the promise of leisure, sport and recreation through labor-saving machinery, rhythms from popular music took on a new lightness, heartlessness and nostalgia, a new classic irony and our proper classic chill. Just as IBM computers are housed in streamlined metal boxes, tastefully tailored with sharp stamping and a milky palette so the classic dance of today at its peak, (*Apollon-Agon*: 1926-1956, Stravinsky-Balanchine) takes its traditional feeling from necessities in history.

Dress-makers speak of classic clothes which persist or recur in a useful repertory of models, but the classic dresses of 1908, though quite reminiscent of the classic dresses of 1808 and 1958, are each recognizeable as representative of their own epoch.[1] So is our present high style in the academic dance. And nothing is less classical, or indeed less 'modern' than a lazy approximation of romantic classicism or the classic romanticism of a past epoch.

CHARACTER DANCING: This term was formerly used to designate the theatrical use of familiar folk-dances, heightened and intensified for performance in opera-houses. Long before there was a developed language of the academic classic ballet, the two chief provinces of Western dancing were High and Low, which meant that a rowdy peasantry jumped up off the ground when making merry in open air, while the gentry stuck to the floor when dancing in roofed ballrooms. The folk danced fast and high; the nobility grave and low. Later, folk-tunes were expropriated by courts and country-dances were adopted by palace people. When planned dances entered de-

1. "Those dance-critics who write as if dance criticism were penal servitude insist that the choreography of *Apollon* is pastiche, a parody of *Lac des Cygnes*, a transient echoing of 'Parisian smartness'. This last it certainly is, if one translates smartness not as smart-aleckness but as essential human elegance. *Apollon* has its chic; it partakes of the permanent international elegance characteristic of French thought, letters, painting, dress-making and cooking, upon which neither American industrialism nor military defeat has had the slightest effect. The dancers in *Apollon* were dressed by Mme. Chanel, who cinctured them with Charvet's striped cravats. They were Olympians of 1928; they remain Olympians in 1948. . . ." (L.K.: "Balanchine Musagète," *Theatre Arts Monthly*, November, 1947)

signed theaters, folk-dances from many remote provinces characterized the quality of racial or national geographical identity or difference. The nostalgia of distance made an international audience acquainted with rhythms from Spain, Italy, the Slavonic realms and Central Europe. What remained 'authentic' in these dances was their basic thematic material—melody, tempo and certain characteristic steps of jota, tarantella, mazurka, hopak, etc. Choreographers embroidered on the slight given groundwork and made solo-numbers or divertissements for opera-repertory, which was often placed in exotic national settings, and which also affected the independent ballet-repertory, itself. Impressive native soloists, with their troupes of fiery nationals started coming to Paris, capital of the world, fairly early in the last century. These were to include not alone Spanish and Russians, but also South East Asian and Japanese as well, frequently attracted by world-fairs. There was often an addition of purely classic school-steps too, in order that the natural or characteristic limitations of authentic steps could be rendered more interesting, indeed more legible, when seen in the alien air and huge spaces of opera-house plateaux. Waltz and cracoviak were performed on toe-point. These impure numbers were called *demi-caractère*; soloists in big institutions like the Paris Grand Opera or the Petersburg Marie Theater specialized in this genre.[2]

The chief use of character-dancing at the present is in divertissements traditionally required in nineteenth century opera-repertory,

2. In a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Dance Teachers Guild of New York City, June 22, 1958, Igor Moiseyev, master of Russian character-dancing said:

"If we analyze the movement of the dance of any nation we find that, in its basis, each system of folk dance possesses only a limited number of different movements. The movements upon which is based the entire system of the dance we call root movements. If we know a number of fundamental movements, a number of the roots of which the language of the dance is composed, and are familiar with the laws of connecting movements, our own fantasy will make it possible to add a number of new movements which would belong in the same system.

This is exactly like knowing a number of basic words in some language and wishing to express a certain thought or emotion. We could make ourselves understood in such an instance by combining the words we know even though we had never come across a complete sentence appropriate to the occasion.

As a rule, root movements are extraordinarily simple. Complexity begins with the combining and uniting of movements. It is important to recognize root movements and to realize how the people vary, embellish and complicate these movements, combining them with other movements." (As reported in *Dance News*, September 1958)

or in revivals of romantic-classic ballets. There are still ex-dancers, chiefly of Russian or Slavic extraction, who teach these dances, but they no longer greatly interest the younger generation of North American performers. The sources, to say nothing of the actual statement, have all the vitality of habitat groups in the Museum of Natural History or photographs of Holland and Norway in the *National Geographic Magazine.*

Spanish dancing is, strictly speaking, hardly 'character-dancing' within the international theatrical vocabulary, since the Iberian peninsula still holds a very ancient and elaborate idiom of its own, just as the peoples of South East Asia and Japan have their own brands of an academic classic dance, remote from ours but scarcely less exact or complex. Spanish dancing has a large body of steps, song, music, costume, style and tradition in performance which demands as much authority in execution as any other expressive idiom. It is a coherent and classic school with overtones of oriental sensibility and mystery from contact with the Moors in Spain. Some foreigners learn to perform it fairly well, just as some strangers learn to fight bulls, but the fact that they are not native to the manner is more interesting than how well they manage it.

However, it can now be amply demonstrated that the United States, unlike any non-Mediterranean or Central European country, has a veritable character-dance style and language of its very own, born in the present century, based on popular musical materials of five decades, attending the development of social-dance band music from rag-time through jazz to rock'n roll. In describing the Newport Jazz Festival of 1958, fourth in a series devoted to the performance of live popular music, *The New Yorker,* July 19, 1958, reported:

> Marshall Stearns, a jazz historian, gave an informed and amusing rundown on jazz dancing, which was illustrated with two dozen interludes by two remarkable dancers, Leon James and Al Minns, who seemed in motion even while standing stock-still, and who did the Cakewalk, the Shake Dance, the Camel Walk, the Eagle Rock, the Shimmy, the Charleston (several variations), the Jig Walk, the Lindy Hop, Trucking, the Suzy-Q (the Arthur Murray version, as taught in 1936, and the legitimate version), the Shorty George, the Big Apple, and a good many more. During the Big Apple (1938), a dance with sixteen separate steps, Minns executed a section in exquisitely slow motion, moving his arms and legs in a series

> of spare swoops and wide steps, which sustained, for perhaps a minute, a liquid tension that was extraordinarily poignant and graceful. This was balanced by a dance called the Shag (1938), which consists of extremely fast, short steps, delivered while the dancer—stiff as a ramrod, his arms at a forty-five degree angle over his head—moves directly up and down like a lightning pile driver, and by the Apple Jack (1945), a dance done to bebop—a music with peculiarly nervous, oblique rhythms and melodies. . . . . .

While these dances, in one form or another, have been utilized year after year in Broadway musicals, reflecting the season's fads in public dance-halls, and while the social dance-bands of the pre- and post World War I era have developed increasingly into an aural virtuoso phenomenon far more to be listened to than danced to, nevertheless a few choreographers have used our jazz vocabulary with arresting effect, most notably Jerome Robbins. His great gift in manipulating popular steps both in the commercial speculative theater and in ballet repertory derives from his classic academic training and innate gifts as a performing dancer. His jazz ballets remain in repertory because they possess a strong formal structure and show, over and above their employment of characteristic steps and combinations, a strong personal attitude. The nature of so much American popular music is its steady uninterrupted ground-base plugged with startling eruptions of improvised cadenzas. Robbins has made sinister games and drugged duets that contain the atmosphere of street-corners at night where teenagers are disguised as ballet dancers, and dancers are domesticated delinquents. He has proposed spasms approaching hypnotic or self-induced exhaustion with fierce bursts of fancy footwork, by no means always funny. Robbins' ballets were designed for particular bodies and qualities of dancers who moved to jazz from having been born into it, as a Balinese child hears the gamelan, and who have also benefitted by schooling in an academic dance. Robbins has made true character-ballets, defining much of the characteristics of his time (mid twentieth century) and place (urban society). It is no easier to make a good jazz ballet than any other kind; possibly it is more difficult, as few choreographers take the trouble to inform themselves in the chaotic vocabulary of steps which seem to wipe themselves out from year to year, where the very persistence of a dance form stamps it as worn-out. But the exuberance of invention

piles up its own accumulated vocabulary for future cultivation.[3]

While the atmosphere of sport has enhanced a new definitio of classicism in the projection of the academic tradition, borrowing from ball-games and field-sports don't much help character-dancing The Moiseyev company of character dancers had a delicious energy exuberance and physical freshness in all their dances from Russia provinces, fast or slow, and even in a number based on the cit social-dances of the epoch of Tchekov. But when they performed i a number inspired by soccer, they had to resort to stiff doses of no very notable pantomime to hold it together.[4] Newspaper photograph of basket-ball players, traffic cops and tennis players are often cap tioned with some reference to 'ballet', but the resemblance make sense only through purely accidental slices of action. Most ball game and competitive sports are designed for the efficiency of pushin human muscular capacity to physiological extremity; this is inci dentally spectacular, but a designed legibility would hamper th economy of movement which is necessary to win games and brea records. It may be interesting to watch games, however hidden th actual strain of muscle, but a dancer's aims are different. Legibilit

3. "By the fall of 1913 America had gone absolutely dance-mad. The whol nation seemed to be divided into two equal forces, those who were for it an those who were against it, and even the champions of the cause had to compro mise to stay in business. When 'ragtime' swept the country the one-step cam right along with it, killing off the waltz and the two-step. A list of the popula dances of the time reads like a table of contents for a zoo, with the turkey-trot the grizzly bear, the bunny hug, the camel walk and the lame duck." (*Castle in the Air,* by Irene Castle, as told to Bob and Wanda Duncan, Doubleday, 1958)

4. Moiseyev reported in the Soviet Embassy magazine *USSR* (No. 8: 23): "I consider *West Side Story* by Jerome Robbins really good theater, done wit beauty and great skill."

Moskovsky Komsomolets, the organ of the Moscow Young Communis League was reported on August 27, 1958 to say that a taste for jazz is a ste towards murder. In reporting a trial of four youths held for murdering a police man, the New York *Herald Tribune* said:

"The Newspaper attempted to explain by saying that the good influenc of school and factory where they work was wasted on the four youths who wer *stilyagi.* The epithet comes from the Russian word for style and is applied t youths who favor extremely narrow trousers, rainbow-colored shirts and lon jackets with padded shoulders.

The paper said their ultra-fashionable clothes caused ironic smiles at th factory and mockery from Y.C.L. members. The youths began to hang out wit other *stilyagi* dancing rock'n roll with girls and drinking cocktails instead of vodka

The Newspaper said the boys next lost all interest in work and Communis ideology and began listening to the Voice of America. They turned to crim to get money for foreign clothes and bootleg jazz records made out of old x-ra plates."

is as important to him as maximum audibility for a musician. If he is not seen in all his possibility, he does not exist. If he is only partly seen, he does not entirely exist. Classic ballet, within the limits of the proscenium frame, by restrictions of theater-vision and a seated audience, has its maximum legibility. Character dancing has a blunted legibility; its roughness helps it characterize a particular place or epoch; if generalized, or rendered Olympian, its special aura is lost.

CHOREOGRAPHY: Space- and time-patterns in several dimensions, historic, geometric, literary and spiritual of what dancers do, not alone traced as an itinerary on stage-floors, but throughout all the air of their cubed area. It is a fluid contrapuntal and polyphonic architecture of groups and individuals, each unit of which bears other separate but corresponding counterpoint and harmony to the various moveable parts—head, neck, arms, trunk, legs down through fingers and toes, to their several working anatomies. And all this musculated apparatus is organized on a floor of rhythmic sonorities, clothed and orchestrated in light and color.

CHOREOGRAPHER: A dance-designer; one who composes dance movement to music, in a variety of styles, all governed by his own vision or commentary on historic periods, including his own. He must ultimately be judged by his personal capacity for stylistic and formal analysis. This determines his gifts as an individual inventor, just as a solo dancer becomes known for certain idiosyncratic talents projected in performance, distinct from the passive anonymity, however correct, of the corps de ballet.

YOUNG CHOREOGRAPHER: A term used to signify anyone under forty-five who designs dances. Young, in this designation, is an honorary token. After a dance-designer reaches the age of thirty and is still known as 'young' there has been little evidence that he has much to show for himself except the repeated promise in delayed maturity. Careers of 'young choreographers' have often announced themselves by flashy bits of ballet; this is infrequently followed by a succession of works embodying a coherent vision, primarily about movement to music, although even secondarily about gesture or pantomime. Young choreographers rarely consider themselves as carpenters or cabinetmakers of the dance. They want to stay young forever, so they may

be forgiven ineptness and praised for possibility. One is most grateful when a choreographer of any age, boy, middle-aged or older makes a serviceable suite of dances which can survive in repertory five years, that will serve as faithfully as a kitchen table. Carpenters of the dance are as scarce as genuine ballet-masters.

Young choreographers, or dancers who decide they should compose dances, tend to lapse into the limbo of disputable success at about the age of thirty plus. If they have not done it by then, they are unlikely ever to do it. There is not much surprise or cumulative development in this field. Just as first-dancers or ballerinas are born heirs-apparent, and never need in a nice democratic way to climb the ladder of slow if merited advancement, a ballet-master is heralded at the outset by the unmistakeable clarion of his own gifts. Certainly, with a young choreographer, signs of newness are confusing; smart tricks and sexy shocks may momentarily mask an absence of analytical instinct.

Lack of opportunity for any dancer of energy to compose dances in America does not obtain at this epoch. Choreographer's workshops, studio chums, or just a couple of other dancers of good will are always at hand to let their bodies be borrowed to be worked on by ambitious characters, generally feeble performers. These should be educating themselves in the rules of musical form, or looking at any pictures or sculpture (except Abstract Art) or reading science, poetry and mythology, but they are licensed to waste the time of their technically more gifted colleagues purely by the promise of novelty. New ballets of value are so rare; ones that actually work and persist, so valuable, that any hint of a chance for a win is blown up by the infectious blackmail in expectation. As between an inventor of pure blood and a craftsman of proven capacity, there is no choice: take both. But as for the Young Choreographer, you tell me how many of them over the last three decades are even capable dance-designers, however old or young they may be in wicked years.

BALLET MASTER: A choreographer who has assimilated the language of the traditional, academic, classic theatrical dance to about the same degree that a Liberal Arts college student with an M. A., or an interne with his M. D., have mastered their materials. A ballet-master is capable of dancing creditably himself, of giving instruction, of reading at least a piano-score, and of dominating a troupe of pro-

fessional dancers so as not to waste their time nor that of the company-management's, which must always be budgeted on union scales per hour; time and a half, overtime. Ballet-masters are trained dancers with good memories who are sufficiently well organized to approximate the repertory in which they have been trained, and able to reproduce it for dancers unfamiliar with it. But they are not to be confused with the veritable and excessively rare,

DANCING MASTER (*Maître à danser*): A choreographer whose gifts or developed talents make him (seldom, if *ever,* her), capable of imposing upon the entire field of Western spectacular dancing an individual manner, so that the repertory he has been able to call into being defines a dominant taste for his time. He is an inventor, finder and amalgamator of dance-steps, gestures and movements, adopting and adapting what has been transmittable from past masters, so that his own combinations are transmogrified into apparent novelty either by reformation or deformation.[5] Often, with a brilliant youthful talent, deformation, a reversal or turning inside out of the expected leads to fresh syntheses of old and new. By the distillation of metrical action and musical mimicry he also enlarges the given language of the dance while elevating standards of capacity in actual performance. He heightens the receptivity of the combined eye-and-ear of the entire audience. Only a master of dancing creates masterpieces of the dance by which the repertory extends itself for survival and revival, constantly tickling a public always avid for the unfamiliar. On the average, through the last three centuries, there have been in all about two masters to a generation. And in each century there has been one master who made the period's durable output virtually his own.

TRADITION: Relative to ballet there are at least two meanings. There is a handing down of instruction, descending uninterruptedly for some three centuries, and a chain of performance of a more or less extant repertory applicable to the last twenty-five years. The tradition in instruction means that successive generations of aspirants learn a language of exercises, steps, movements and combined gesture in order that their stage-performance be accurate, legible and brilliant. The models for this teaching are five basic elementary positions, exer-

5. J.A.D. Ingres: "Le tâche n'est pas d'inventer, mais de continuer."

cises, fragments from past works, clad in a variety of styles, fitting many musics. Just as an inherited accumulation of gathered information swells the body of law, medicine, musical notation and poetic metric, so a descent of irreductible constants and accretions on these, form a method for transmitting lore. What is now danced in public is what has been found useful to teach in private, increasingly meaningful and exciting through the annual theater seasons of centuries. This uninterrupted and developed tradition, supported by the flowering of the symphonic band and the formal organization of musical composition is continuously amplified by shots in the arm from popular sources (for us, jazz), as it was for our great-grandfathers by theatricalized folk dancing (the later waltz, polka, mazurka, polonaise, etc.).

Tradition in performance is, unlike teaching, discontinuous, always interrupted, depending upon shifts in the social structure, manners, accidents of historic taste and revivals, tensions and treaties between nations, exiles of minorities, class wars and colonial settlement, reformations and revolutions. As understood today, particularly by Britain, bulwark of feudalism in decline, tradition means correctness in the restoration of an older repertory. The traumatic experience of the initial appearances of the Diaghilev company in Western Europe placed an almost insupportable weight on succeeding generations of producers and has precipitated them into a deep double dilemma. Any new ballet has its instant of dewy freshness and novel shock. This impact comes from a combination of the performances of those dancers who first appear in it, and from the fact that it has never, as a whole, been viewed before. If it enjoys success, it must be exploited. Then, eventually, soon or late, the moment arrives for retirement, having exhausted an immediate audience; finally, every audience has its limits. Hence the appeal of every new work, however triumphant, has limits too. If and when it is revived, as part of 'tradition' it often falls into the custody of a ballet-master whose only energy is memory. Assuming that memory is impeccable, complete and imaginative rather than partial and approximate, which is normal, the first flash of impact can never really be recaptured, recreated, nor a first cast re-assembled. As in recent revivals by the Royal Ballet of early Stravinsky works, the initial landmarks of the Diaghilev era (*Firebird, Petrouchka*) many still living collaborators associated with the original productions of pre-World War I were

convened. But, first of all, Stravinsky's considered re-scoring and his revisions were ignored. His partition in its first performance had scaled theatrical heaven and was not to be tampered with, even by its own author. Portions disavowed both by Stravinsky and Diaghilev, who generally seem to have known what they were doing, were 're-stored' making the revived version even more original than the original. Surprise was registered that the resuscitation fell short of the recorded effect of the debut, since music was the same, decor and costume were more than the same, and the choreography, at least in the steps of the chief dancers, was 'exactly' the 'same'. Three things were not the same and never could be: the dancers themselves (originally Nijinsky, Karsavina, Bolm); the taste of the public already long modified by Diaghilev and Stravinsky; the historical moment with its new necessities, interests and answers. Tradition invoked was correctness documented. Vain hope. Here is no lively continuum but an invidious attempt to repeat the unrepeatable.

The liveliest tradition of our ballet was that which Diaghilev came to introduce through annual seasons of Parisian novelty, coinciding with the showing of new salons, of automobiles, dress-making, painting and sculpture. Through the agency of international music and the plastic arts based on Paris, through an important connection with great dress-making (Poiret, Paquin, Lanvin, Chanel) and originally the chamberlain's wand of Jean Cocteau, Diaghilev translated the researches of painters and composers into a living tradition of focussed surprise. Cocteau's role in all this has been vastly underestimated, except by himself. When in 1909, Diaghilev commanded the adolescent flâneur: *Amaze me,* it was an imperial ukase. Diaghilev knew well that astonishment was not merely amusement. *Etonne-moi*: and that parade started which has not yet entirely stopped.[6] Cocteau, for half a century, has been the metaphysician of novelty. More than any other poet, except Stravinsky, with whose career he has had important contact, Cocteau has affected our lyric theater in drama, dance and film. Starting as an amateur court jester disguised as an harlequin (whose social background was not unlike Diaghilev's), he has had himself canonized as a respectably disreputable academician with a career that is paradoxically consistent. Only

6. "Le célèbre mot: 'Etonne-moi', qu'il me dit, place de la Concorde, résume sa soif marcopolesque d'inconnu." (Jean Cocteau: *Encyclopédie du Théâtre Contemporain, Paris,* 1957, Vol. I: 1850-1914.)

Cocteau could say: "The principle of novelty becomes very difficult to recognize when our age forces us to remove from it its usual attributes of strangeness." Cocteau, for example, has had a far more influential role in the practicing world theater than Gordon Craig, whose position through history books looms larger, year by year, more shadowy and out of scale than his own unrealized renderings. Cocteau's divinations through Diaghilev channels imposed much of the quality of ballet taste and style which has become our commonplace. He spelled out the policy simply and early: the rehabilitation of the everyday, the use of magic in the ordinary; circus, cinema, choreography, or wherever the usual could be tricked by retouching into the humanly touching. Cocteau substituted a lyric contemporaneity for historic revivalism, the actual for the decorative: *Parade* (Satie-Massine-Picasso, 1917) in place of, for example *Le Pavilion d'Armide* (Tcherepnin-Fokine-Benois, 1909). He took the ballet out of the realm of bureaucratic administration and gave it hectic life from the boulevards, that busy Bohemia of *la fourmillante cité* which has been Paris' gift to the rest of the world at all times, even today. When we watch our jazz ballets in dungerees it is only an extension of the deliberately 'poor' style which Cocteau first tapped forty years ago.

STYLE: The lively classic tradition in performance depends upon the style in the dancing which is, like stoicism or elegance, a moral virtue. Individuals as well as companies can be recognized by particular qualities which, when analyzed, define their particular manner. The style of companies reflect their sponsorship, social, economic, personal and political. The style of soloists is determined by private character and temperament. An artist tries to frame a performance as a self-portrait in action distilled from dross, cut and polished to flash from fiery footlights like fifty diamonds in the face of helpless adoration. The conquest of untidy egotism, the elimination of self-consciousness, the ragged preoccupation with personal inadequacy, the denial of unsureness which renders watchers doubly insecure, and a visible concern in his public self for others, audience as well as colleagues on stage, mark the start of style. Then, with all technical considerations conquered or presupposed, begins to appear that graciousness easing all risk, disability or ineptness which is the dancer's free-will offering of a simulacrum of perfection. Its height is the most simple pleasure in pleasing. Selflessly, the artist gives his all

and it's not too much. Here is the ultimate gauge of elegance. It becomes the face or mask of individual style.

There are stylistic ornaments, some borrowed from history, others acquired in the present, affected or inherited, but none useless or merely decorative when great persons absorb them into their own rhetoric. The grand manner is elaborately transparent; it displays the purged personality like the insides of a glass anatomical model. The whole complex apparatus functions, but with self-illuminating light rather than vital juices. Grace seems to wipe out every trace of vulgar toil. In the reflection of this fierce inner glow the gratitude of audiences for revelations of super-human capacity dissolves in tears and cheers. The bravos of balletomanes mean: thanks for your elegance. You do what we hardly believe can happen. You are what we never can be. You redeem our meanness and weakness by hints of strength purified. Pardon our mortality by stillness in sound and unarrested action. In your balance is our chance.

Style is braided with manners, morals and morality. Manners indicate mutual concern, embracing a conservative tone determining the presentation of Self, its harnessing, pruning and cultivation. Ego is at the heart of style; the somatic energy in self must be granted its immediate and concrete expression. I must be seen and brightly; but how? As a master, with the manners of mastery. I am so marvelous, so capable, so full of potential that, in my performance, in all the betrayals of personal behavior bridging my purely acrobatic skills to fuse them as art, I must seem really kind, genuinely gracious, truly pleasing, relaxed, generous in an acme of attention to my partners and my public.

Distinction between the performance-manners of a ballet dancer, a bull fighter and a circus acrobat are matters of scale since all make motions determined by the limits of necessity. A circus-arena is circular and enormous; so is a bull ring. All eyes are riveted on defiance of gravity and death. The bodies in play are as vulnerable as they are essentially nude, but they find an impersonality from being at so great a distance from the watchers. The scale of presentation must be broad to be legible. In bull fighting, where some creature's death is always desired, manipulators are clad gloriously in raiment of heavy light; the sequins at once dehumanize and glorify the player. Concentration in the passes is terrific, but movement must be comparatively compact. The risk is so appalling that, to survive,

fighters diminish the apparent weight of danger by neatness; this makes it tolerable. Diminishment or deprecation adds up to nobility, disdain of hazard.

Ballet has its risks, too. Snapped Achilles tendons are no jokes; sprains and strains are the gorings of the dance. There is exhaustion, too, but unlike in rings for lions, tigers or bulls, death is not a present partner. Hence the style of physical domination is lighter, more transparent, sweeter and less stern. But there is parallel striving to reach pinnacles of spectacular intensity. Discipline, hazard and display are always in triangular polarity as factors to be refined, combined, calibrated and kept wide open. Elegance is laconic; ostentation is channelled as modest championship. Skill keeps its own secrets. The peak of ballet style strives toward power in all star performances, but lacking the iron needs of the bull fighter, some ballet soloists, if they are not constrained, topple over into sweeping effects more appropriate to the circus. On tanbark, this broadness is a normal response to necessity; in the opera house it seems pure selfishness, a flaccid style, swollen scale, bad manners. The big-star style veers easily towards parody, self-impersonation, the negative sincerity of burlesque and party-camping.[7]

STARS: First dancers hold a peculiar place in ballet repertory. Their position is hard to equate with stars of stage, screen or opera. There are relatively few starring rôles for the male specialist; he must content himself with divertissement, support of just fine dancing. Lady stars have their *Giselle, Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Coppelia* and the few others. There is a received idea that Giselle is the Hamlet rather than the Ophelia of ballet. It is a charming two act work with a delicious score and a strong libretto. Anyone familiar with

7. Jim Brent, a British acrobat, described a Soviet circus-school over the BBC (August 21, 1958):

"In Moscow the circus school had just started. To this center came young people with talent and the right physique to be taught in the basic skills of circus. Their teachers were veteran performers, people with a rich experience, eager to pass on their accumulated knowledge to those following them. A stipend was paid to each pupil and academic subjects were fitted into the course. Many people saw the graduates of this school when the Soviet State Circus visited this country [England] recently. Perhaps, like me, they were struck with the neatness and grace of these artists; there is a ballet *barre* and mirror in every circus building in the Soviet Union. The circuses there are all permanent buildings with programmes running all the year round. The Russians are great circus lovers."

the correspondence surrounding its original collaboration knows that the great poets responsible for its book had their tongues firmly in cheek while they worked it up. Notwithstanding their witty canonization of an epoch in European taste, the work has become, thanks to the keepers of the true flame of ballet tradition, sacrosanct. It is also commercially powerful as a star-vehicle. It is the hereditary property of whatever ballerina can claim legitimate descent from the first 'romantic' ballerinas. In our memory, the line is conceded to stem from Anna Pavlova, to have included Spessiva, whom few in the West saw but who seems to have been the best if poets and painters are to be believed. When you see *Giselle* today it is not easy to know whom you really see, since there is always a double or triple-exposure of shadowy precedents. It is the star rôle par excellence but it seldom glows with genuine individual incandescence. The currently starring star is fated to borrow an ancestral prestige from all those who have shone before her. As she adopts the romantic hair-do, she assumes the habit of an order. So it remains a real test for an intelligent dancer, because there is a lively tradition to buck, or accommodate. Of course it may be said that many in the audience know none of this; to them, Pavlova is as remote as Taglioni or Elssler, and Spessiva does not exist. This is true, but it is also true that the ikons of the great ones of the past are very much alive in the minds and imaginations of reigning stars, and in those of the critics who prepare their images; those images blackmail as much as they inspire. Often they even cloud individual identity and jealously prevent a good artist from knowing who she really is.

Sometimes audiences identify the special language of the classic dance in its many facets of formal, informal and deformed styles with the personal idiosyncrasies of individual performers. It is sometimes difficult not to confuse dances with dancers. Serge Lifar thought that he invented *Apollon Musagète*. Many among the public even have the notion that a strong solo performer designs his or her own variations. This is only true to the degree that a clever choreographer will try his best to show off certain qualities or specialities calculated to fit a given temperament and body, rather than to impose an arbitrary expression of his own which might be against the star dancer's idea of himself or herself. Balanchine invented *Apollon* on orders from Diaghilev to create a star out of a splendid body that had little training in the orthodox classic dance. That such a tour de force also em-

bodied the greatest modern rôle for a male dancer indicates the ca-
pacity of this choreographer, then twenty-three years old.

The more overweening the personal stamp of a star, the less re-
lation he or she has to the company in which he or she appears. Al-
most stars want is a concentrated chance to display breath-taking ex-
cercises. Weak dance-designs are sometimes salvaged, if rarely dis-
tinguished, by personal insistence. Many ephemeral compositions are
contrived not as patterns interesting or lasting in themselves, but as
expedient space-suits for popular jumping-jacks. In most ballets, apart
from frank divertissements, which content most stars, their very pres-
ence may flatten out other aspects of the choreography if it has much
intrinsic interest. The ballerina exists, not to demonstrate ideas or
art, but herself: instrument and personality. This is acknowledged in
most ballet-programming at least once an evening. It is natural for
stars to prefer flashy brief numbers, starting slow, building to fast
ending in a dazzle to reap their rousing reward. The chief use of a
star in repertory is to set a standard of execution at which competi-
tors and aspirants aim. A star-turn is important on the evening's bill
of fare. It allows other members of the company to relax through one
whole ballet. It sharpens the eyes of the audience in a heightened
focus on a single body or pair of bodies. It instructs the eye of the
public into a dissection of what actually goes on in the basic vocabu-
lary of the classic academic dance. It presents in small units, those
chords and clusters combined and employed through multiple mov-
ing bodies which is the stuff of dance design.

It is almost impossible, however, for stars once more or less se-
curely set in ballet's firmament to accept repertory rôles. Somehow
no part of newness seems ever really to fit them. New rôles have no
precedent and each one has its logistical presumption of failure. Stars
are helped to think of themselves as souls apart, locked in their pri-
vate specialties, only pleased to display those aspects of their per-
sonality which they have lazily selected. This does not make them
easy or grateful in working for a choreographer, who may have dif-
ferent and even broader ideas of what they might well do. Since
stars know in advance what they want to look like in addition to
what they want to do, it doesn't leave much room for a dance-
designer. The worst of it is that pretexts for dictated vehicles don't
add up to much in repertory, except in those 'dramatic' or 'psycho-
logical' ballet-pantomimes where emoting replaces dancing. But i

is too much to expect that stars should be modest or analytical; would we adore them as much if they were?

It would seem normal that dancers have realistic ideas about ballets in which they appear; this is often true if it refers to them, individually. Stars consider almost any choreography composed without them in mind, and indeed without them uniquely in mind, uninteresting. They cannot be bothered with standard repertory. When they can be persuaded to perform in it, which happens now and then mostly for emergency reasons, they are not very rewarding since they have performed the rôles too infrequently to realize the most that can be derived from them.

It has been said that stars are born, not made, and that audiences, not managements, make stars. Both are true. And stars are useful as long as they are good dancers. As one Broadway director replied when told to hire a Hollywood name: Look, I have nothing against stars, if they can act. Stars are splendid, particularly when they have pretty manners, do not give offensive personal interviews and make few demands which the management cannot fulfill. But, alas, there is a professional deformation or occupational hazard, not confined by any means to ballet alone, but present in baseball, bull fighting, opera and every performing art. A self-generating egotism based on the awareness of special skills mastered, often manifest in ballet by an excessive sweetness or 'modesty' which can be a heavier bludgeon than brass knuckles, takes over. The persona, the self-awarded mask becomes the real iron puss. Stars begin to believe their personal press-agents. The self is won away from the fragile concept of balance in perfection that keeps great artists both on their toes and on their track. The greatest talent of the Thirties, at an unpardonably early age, turned into an ex-dancer who impersonated herself; grotesque, wasteful and very sad.

INVENTION: A term often confused with Creation, Originality or Novelty. In the Age of Faith, the word Creation, and its parent Creator, was a theological appellation with strict limits. It referred to Lord God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, before Whom there was no thing; or else the range of great nature brought into being, balance and movement through His Will. Later, in the Renaissance, a new artistic device was *trovata,* a finding, not a creation. Vasari praised the gifts of eminent masters as *belli invenzioni,* fair findings or fresh

handlings. Towards the end of the Age of Reason such terms as Creative, Creativeness and Creativity corrupted the idea of the irreversible fact of a Prime Mover, from which all other moving and ordering is organized. As creation was from God, to be creative was deemed god-like. Artists became god-like creators. Craftsmen disappeared into self-expressors who created their own autobiographical myths, although there is no evidence that many artists, and particularly young choreographers, are even masters of a craft let alone of an art. Artists are now expected to make newness by projecting their selves, instead of redistributing observable elements according to their gifts, their energy to develop these gifts, the taste of their time and the needs of the ballet-repertory at a given moment. Talent to whatever degree of ignorance or indiscipline, since it belonged to the same big family of energy shared by the god-like masters, has been assumed to possess some unique and absolutely qualifying authority.

Invention, meaning to come upon (among much phenomenon), or discover, or sometimes rediscover, not from nothing, but from what is given or available to find, has been confused as creation in our massive dragnet for novelty. In ballet-repertory, a new work is novel to the degree that its elements have not been seen before, or recently, by a given public, in this form. In ballet, in our time, novelty has been recognized as a healthy or tasty inversion, a systematic or even apparently haphazard reversal of the academic or expected: broken phrases, deliberate denial of suavity, silence for sound and rest where movement would ordinarily have been awaited. One of the advantages of the iron-maiden of classic academic instruction is the violent launching towards a new liberty impelled by breaking its rules. But too often, shock in surprise is an end. It's hard to be surprised twice running if the only virtue in astonishment is the unexpected. The hope of every novelty is to remain in repertory. When analyzing the creativeness of a contemporary creator, it is useful to tally up his total number of works currently in use and their respective longevity, rather than the whole roster of first performances for which he has been responsible.

It will astonish few familiar with the story of theatrical dancing to find that while originality is the sine qua non of a dancing-master, this newness consists finally of neither shock nor surprise. True originality is rarer than uranium, and like it generates enormous power

for influence in both positive and negative directions. Invention, apart from its essential drive towards discovery, uncovering or recovering is also dependent on the gift for designing consistent and fluid movement in continuous sequence, equations of joined or disjunct physical phrasing. The true inventor has an over-all concept of an audio-visual totality in composition, based on his analysis of the governing music, and a power to move many bodies about a stage with as much ease and freshness as the separate parts of a single dancer's body move by themselves in balance with its whole. It is this wholeness of mortised parts inlaid in the stylistic cabinet, which by its transparent clarity of structure demands to be looked at with skinned eyes, that stamps the master craftsman long after its initial unfamiliarity has worn away.

An original work, as opposed to one in which there is a studding of novel morsels set in a commonplace bed, is a self-illuminated whole which maintains its equilibrium by a conviction or a revelation of a chosen palette or serial octave of human movement which is parallel (one of unnumbered parallels) to the basic musical impulse. True originality refocuses the attentive eye, not alone on a new ballet, but after this has become domesticated, extending the whole language of moving on stage. It subtly modifies the rest of the repertory as well which becomes lit with a new light, appears in a new perspective, and serves as a point of departure, as one of many origins for further useful and even original works.

THE DANCER: He or she is the unit of human capacity which makes ballet possible in performance. The dancer's professional training may be equated with that of the medical interne; army, navy or air-corps cadet; divinity or law-student, piano player or bronze founder. That is, dancers must submit their bodies (and minds) to a specialized, rigorous and competitive discipline for at least ten years. This discipline is partly acrobatic, musical (either conscious or instinctive) and to a degree greater than is commonly recognized by the great public, moral, since it involves hard choices about the usual pleasures of youth.

Young dancers have no time for anything much but dancing in order to emerge at an age very much earlier than most masters of a craft, capable of activity immeasurably beyond those not so trained, and of making their living by it. Apart from a dancer's innate gift

of potential virtuosity, which he or she is granted at the outset and which alone justifies the servitude of preparation—aside from a fair appearance (straight legs, small head, small hips, facial features either interesting in themselves or capable of being made so), inborn musicality and some (not a lot) of analytical intelligence—there is that supreme extra, but indispensable gift of being able to know how to exploit the (ultimately) comparatively few talents that are ever grudgingly given to any one person. The tragedy in lack of fulfillment of many aspirants is their inability to push their few real assets into that unique extremity which tests their triumph. How few artists of any sort recognize their identity; how few can tell you when you ask them with final exasperation: who do you think you *are*? An artiste? A dancer? A worker in theater? A lover of the Dance? A plumber? Me: who, ME? Yes, you.

The failure to risk identity is finally the failure of energy, physical and moral. A girl of fourteen pleads with her parents to let her go to the big city for advanced training: Darling mummy, dearest daddy, all I want to be is a brainless ballerina. That she was far from brainless goes without saying, for early, but at an age crucial to the dancer, she had already made her well-informed, realistic choice.[8] No college-education to fit the home-maker; no proms; no dating (or not much); not much fun as ordinarily understood by teenagers; little togetherness. Virgil Thomson says dancers are autoerotic and have no conversation. That they possess a special temperament is true, and if they do not feel eminently suited to their life which is a secular retreat, they will be, however accidentally endowed, unhappy in it. Either they cannot stick out the training or they may take an easier route. With what they have managed to pick up in studios, combined with what ambition they have been able to husband, they can carry their little bundle of craft into the squalid routine of musical comedy, television or the deadly drudge of the Broadway hit-or-flop. In the one you die of boredom; in the other you don't eat. Dancers outside the classic, academic theatrical dance are in a separate category. Today you don't find many younger students de-

8. "Baseball is an endless chain of unconscious actions. A batter's swing is composed of reflexes. Once he started to think he'd be as lost as a ballet dancer starting to think. She'd wind up in the orchestra pit. Students of the sport claim that the only ballplayer who was master of his reflexes was Ty Cobb. He was thinking sixty seconds per minute." (Arthur Daley, The New York *Times,* September 23, 1958)

termined to make a career in the so-called 'modern' dance. Those who enter it take this vocation comparatively late. They are not unlike lay-analysts who for a variety of reasons, good and bad, cannot stand the long internship or long residency in institutions that tradition determines. Some dancers stand on the periphery of theater just as some therapists on the brink of medicine.

A ballet-dancer's training includes the assimilation, indeed the mastery of boredom in repetitious practice, excercise, rehearsal; practice, exercise, rehearsal; practice, exercise, rehearsal. They must abjure a 'fascinating' social and personal life or anything approaching that dissipation which would be useful education for poets, but which would prevent prompt attendance at early morning practice, exercise or rehearsal. In Colette's marvelous novel, Chéri taunts his icy wife, then busying herself as a volunteer hospital superintendant, when she won't cuddle snugly in bed. "It's as if I'd married a ballet-dancer. Nine o'clock sharp, the Class: it's sacrosanct. It has to come before everything else."

What keeps dancers going (and there is that point of no return when passed; like a ship launched, you can't stop it), is a one-tracked dedication to an increasingly less vague idea of perfection in performance. This standard must finally be set by the individual dancer alone; only he or she can know of what he or she is ultimately capable. Sometimes they will be surprised, not always agreeably. The higher the aim, the nearer approached (and every useful memoir of a famous dancer's career is filled with sincere and convincing admissions of various degrees of failure at each epoch of their careers), the more intense the self-competition. No records of speed, honors or dollars are inscribed on class-room or rehearsal-room walls to inspire their surpassing. There is no four minute mile to smash. One does not go on practicing year after year because Mount Everest is *there*. The dancer's energy, like that of other artists when possessed by the muse rather than the self, is somewhat akin to the talent for indignation in saints and martyrs, a longing towards super-service or super-performance, approaching divinity in execution. Why are supreme opera-singers hailed *diva*? Why is Maria Callas veritably *La Divina*? Why was Sarah Bernhardt recognized *divine*? And to make masochism more maddening, dancers must always be at the mercy of choreographers to whom they entrust themselves. They remain the creatures of the choreographer, but without them he is hamstrung.

The dancer's career is not viewed kindly by that American family who is depicted as the core of our country, backbone of TV, supermarkets, automobiles and eaters of mass-media, except those who have been sufficiently tenderized by television to bank on a chance for a quick Hollywood contract for home-grown starlets. Infants are mildly abused all over the nation by unscrupulous teachers who force toddlers up on toe-point about as fast as they can talk, and trick them out annually in pink and green recital tarletans (of nylon) for toe-tap or baton-twirling routines. Most of these kids, some of whom might have had promise, are wrecked for any practical purpose but cheer-leading by the time they are ten.

While professional dancers make a poor to fair living, they can teach long and quietly after they quit the stage, and their stage career is quite long. If you start from sixteen to eighteen, you can dance anyways for more than twenty years. It is a craft naturally determined by the physical ebullience of youth but the greatest performers are those well along in their thirties; ripeness is all. Very few dancers persist in their hard lives from any false hope of high pay. They dance because they are possessed by the gods or demons of dancing. They dance because they want to. Security is not a consideration. They throw their lives away and find them. Naturally, any cautious parent would worry, but dancers eat more regularly (and a great deal more) than other artists (painters, sculptors, poets, composers). They are healthier, support themselves sooner, are cleaner and live longer.

The problem of the young male dancer in the United States is awkward. In Soviet Russia today, as in other countries where the state assumes responsibility for the talents of those children who may be expected to bring them glory, irrespective of their parent's capacity to pay (artists, as well as scientists), boy dancers have long worn the same style of uniform as military or navel cadets. The only distinction is in the collar insignia; dancers wear lyres, sign of Great Apollo, Leader of the Muses, rather than crossed rifles or anchors, the badge of Mars or Neptune. In America, where skills at speculative ball-games are fixed at a premium past any other human capacity, dancing to good music on a stage has an effete smell. A talented youth, unless, he happens to come from a theatrical or musical family, or one so low in the social structure that even dancing is some sort of advancement, must kill his parents, symbolically at least, if

he is finally to achieve his heart's desire. It would be better for most artists, except novelists, to be orphans. For the Dance there is the crucial moment in the ritual encounter: "Son, if you persist in this folly you will Kill Your Mother." Mother rarely allows the same for Dad, but it would be more honest if she did. The worst of it is that by the time Son has had the sense to blast this blackmail, the guts to leave home and get a job operating an elevator to pay for his lessons, he will be too old to profit by them. The very few brilliant (i.e. well-trained) male dancers bred in the West have all had, by some fluke or another, ten or more years of hard training before they were twenty. To make matters worse, the army demands its pound of flesh, and while some boys get themselves deferred, it is the rule that the best young dancers must waste two years at the very instant when they could be serving their country far more usefully, appearing in State Department tours to impress our hoped-for allies with our spiritual superiority.[9]

The prejudice against male dancing (which never extends to high-paid performers in variety, TV, films or Broadway, or to visiting British or Russians) has its roots in the position of the Ballerina in the last century. By 1850 male soloists were reduced to almost no activity but supporting ladies; they were called porteurs and transported girls about the stage. The men became so uninteresting that they were replaced by other girls who were dressed in men's uniforms. Opera ballet had whole categories of performers *en travestie*. Girls look good in tights. Ballets, such as those enlivening the first famous extravaganzas that were shown in this country (*The Black Crook,* 1866; *The White Faun,* 1868) gave our great-grandfathers and their young sons a serious trauma. The women were painted hussies to be sure, but those boy-things were straight from Sodom. Girls they

9. In a brilliant article analyzing the national interest in watching sports, Edward L. Rousseau wrote in "The Great American Ritual" (*The Nation,* October 4, 1958):

"Unlike basketball or football, the so-called national game (baseball) does not have the nostalgic association with high school or college days glanced at above. Like any ritual which has not degenerated into a relic, it is a unifying factor in society, imitating real life and yet different from it. The comparison sometimes made with ballet is false. The center of interest both in sports and in American life is a compulsive concern with what the score is. You don't keep score at the Ballet Russe—one reason why the American male is not at home there, in spite of the appetizing scenery. The world of professional athletics is as remote from the everyday round of American life as any art form, but sport—while sufficiently exotic to serve as an escape—appeals to a motive that is immediately intelligible. . . ."

might be, but they were called "ballet-boys." "I'd rather see my daughter (son) *dead* than on the stage." These atavistic, murderous, half-voiced and half-remembered sentiments still obtain among a majority of families who could easily provide as good boys as they have, grudgingly indeed, good girls. They deprive that department of the dance of what is perhaps its greatest glory since the man's body is capable of athletic extension denied the (mechanically) weaker sex.

Only with the emergence of the Russian Ballet in Western Europe before the 1914 war, did our time catch the first breathless astonishment of dancing men, perhaps unequalled at any epoch before or since. And ironically enough, the appearance of the boy dancers of the Moiseyev folk-ballet on American TV in the winter of 1958 may have accomplished more than anything else in showing the mass-public how good youths can look if given the full chance to be well schooled. Ted Shawn in our Twenties and Thirties did pioneer work on an evangelical rather than an aesthetic level. His men were strong and athletic. But flexed deltoids are only a superficial apology for male dancing; elegance is the real criterion. Americans now understand elegance in small foreign cars, cravats, sports-clothes, TV cabinets and the typography of luxury-advertising.

Contemporary male Soviet ballet-dancers (as distinct from their character-dancers) are strong as weight-lifters; indeed this is the way they are mostly used. The whole climate of native Russian ballet is retardative, even in its vast efficiency; men are generally considered as carriers or mimes, just as in the mid nineteenth century. Nijinsky was exiled from the Imperial Theaters. He made his great reputation not in Russia, but in the West.

In the best dance-theater, there is a polarity of male and female on an equal see-saw of elegance and muscularity. The power of the male for leaps in the lateral conquest of space sets off the softness, fragility, speed and multiplicity of the ballerina's action on pointe and in the sustainment of held, breathless equilibrium. Male dancers make girls more feminine and vice versa.

THE AUDIENCE: Lacking the patronage of princes, a privy purse or state subsidy, audiences in the United States (but not in Europe) are what finally pay for the ballet. Ballet is now far too expensive to support for single patrons even with means, as was the rule for three centuries. And Diaghilev had a devilish time finding enough

TWO BALLETS

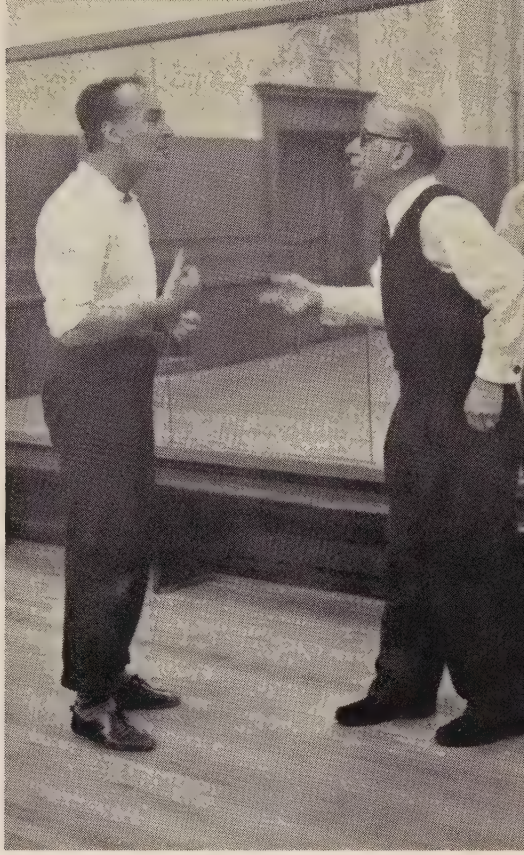
by

GEORGE BALANCHINE

and

IGOR STRAVINSKY

photographed by
MARTHA SWOPE



In the beginning—discussion by choreographer and composer.

"APOLLO"

Jacques d'Amboise
Melissa Hayden
Diana Adams, Patricia Wilde, Melissa Hayden, Jacques d'Amboise
Diana Adams, Jacques d'Amboise

"AGON"

The Company
Diana Adams with the company
Roy Tobias, Melissa Hayden, Jonathan Watts
Roy Tobias, Jonathan Watts
Diana Adams, Arthur Mitchell
Todd Bolender
Diana Adams, Arthur Mitchell

我的世界

money even for his earliest seasons. Nor is this to say that a ballet-company costs more annually on the basis of its service than a symphony orchestra, opera company, library or museum. Actually, a first-class company playing forty weeks of work a year, maintaining a fairly progressive policy of commissioning new works, keeping the old ones spick and span (sweat rots clothes fast), paying the artists at least on the minimum union level, needs about $100,000.00 a year over and above an approximate $1,000,000.00 gross. In America, ballet is just on the brink of being institutionalized. Ballet, like Shakespeare, Verdi and Beethoven must be institutional, public-service theater. (The public in one way or another even has to pay for the housing of Raphael and Degas.) Ballet is not speculative theater, like Broadway, where people buy shares hoping for hits. Ballet can more than make its own way if it has a revolving fund for an intelligent management to play with. Ballet has partially supported itself, and also very handsomely those entrepreneurs who import foreign troupes. Native managers don't much like the native product. Native companies lack the selling prestige of the appellation Royal or even National. It's hard to sell the provinces without a massive commercial organization. The condition for the expansion of ballet into a future situation worthy of its great capacity, by the coherent and comprehensive training of a dancer-pool from all over our nation, like the training offered by the new Air Corps Academy, and a logical program for the commanding and production of new works, as well as the steady maintenance of a superior trained personnel, can never be assured. Most Americans don't care, and those who do can't pay. Yet there are signs that the fascinated audience (sometimes stated to be larger in number than the gross public for live ball-games) having at least tasted a promise of development, might mobilize itself into annual support for organizations with attractive programs and policies, who are capable of guaranteeing dancers a year-round job, and who know what history has taught them about repertory, its revival and renewal. There are at least three kinds of audiences: a general public, a special public and a critical one.

THE GENERAL PUBLIC includes those who like theatre in its multiformity, including music, drama, sport, films and Shakespeare. They are, by and large, unprejudiced, attentive, if not habitual customers, and promptly throb to broad or massive effects without de-

manding, or indeed noticing refinement in detail. Like those ignorant of chronology, to them the past is simultaneous. They neither know nor care which choreographer anticipated which, or if ballet is actually Russian, British, or American. They are satisfied with what appears to be technical prowess and they applaud obediently if a single movement, no matter how simple or tiresome, is repeated more than three times. To them, apparent physical fireworks are more satisfactory than energy robed in elegance. They like wide stages filled with scads of dancers moving more or less in unison to a strong beat and swinging tune, hoked up with costumes and scenery that cost money. Some of them develop into a more responsible

SPECIAL (or BALLETOMANE) PUBLIC which corresponds to opera lovers, boxing, baseball or bull fight enthusiasts. These have strong personal preference in dancers, companies and choreographers, and share a passion for the performance, if neither the art nor science of stage-dancing. They loyally attend first-nights of new seasons and new works, providing an electric social air of anticipation, although their initial reaction to a debut is frequently ambiguous and insecure. They have endless good-will and always expect a smash-hit which justifies or corroborates their interest in being in the theater just ahead of the great indiscriminate audience. They are by no means sure that they know what they like. If a season has been latterly distinguished by a 'new' score of Igor Stravinsky (his twenty-first in nineteen years) this serves as standard. Here is gilt-edged security. Correspondingly, they may be shocked (well, yes, *shocked*) by a new number to music by John Philip Sousa, previously tagged as a hack of military marches. This balletomane public is custodian of serious and significant ballet, conservative at core, constituting itself guardian of tradition, which means they identify excellence with past performances they may have seen or happen to remember. They have no knowledge of the idiom or vocabulary of the classic dance, even to the extent of some of them snapping photographs, painting abstracts or playing the piano. They should be made to pay, but it is too much to expect that they will pay well.

THE CRITICAL PUBLIC numbers among it poets, painters, musicians, journalists, diplomats, dentists and lovers of fine furniture, gardens, dogs, books and cooking, who bring to their observation of

theatrical dancing some schooled sensual analysis from the parallel criteria of their own vocations or avocations. A working background in architectural logic and style, musical history and composition, poetic metric or landscape gardening enables a member of this specialist public to make responsible judgment past mere enthusiasm or accidental personal revelation, without in any way removing the 'pleasure' from a performance. There is a common American superstition that if you know too much about an art you will be deprived of that first fine rapture which absolves you from learning anything more about it. You cannot know too much. Few people who don't know anything about it *do* know what they like. They can't, because their eyes and ears are only open to a surface slice of spectacle. However, they need to be far less instructed in the particulars of the classic dance, the various names of steps or combinations, than about the existence of skill in other art or craft. If one has a qualitative opinion about a new office-building that pretends to be monument rather than shelter, if one recognizes the difference between two civic orchestras, and if one honestly cares about The Dance (many do not; why should they?), chances are that this unit of the critical public does actually know what he likes, that how he likes it is not small talk, and that if he likes a certain new work it will probably be continued in the repertory until it has a chance to be generally inspected. There are also

CRITICS, in the formal or professional sense, those who are paid for their opinions of performances; these also form a division of every audience—general and special. Critics are working journalists who earn their living by servicing each group, reporting for the daily, weekly and monthly press, and for less than half-a-dozen high-brow quarterlies, all of whom feel an urge to encourage dancing and dancers if they possibly can. Very often they are music critics on detached service. It would make more sense to let art-critics cover choreography, since in spite of a musical base it is essentially a visual matter; just as some painters are tone-deaf, so many musically trained writers are form and color blind. Professional critics are neither very discriminating nor very harmful; the weekly press takes its tone meekly or lazily from the daily press; the weekly recapitulations in the two most influential New York papers make the most sense and can be read as the record over the years, allowing for over-generosity in the

encouragement of secondary activity, which is legitimate educationally and from charitable aspects. The audience—general, special and critical—over the last decade has come to by-pass the working critics who are read more for curiosity or corroboration than for advice. Individual poor notices of a new ballet cannot kill it to the same degree that a play is assassinated by the two major New York drama critics. Apathy in personal conviction is greater in the field of speculative theater. People don't want to be wrong about an investment, but they can exercise a modicum of personal preference when money is not involved; everyone knows new ballets are a dead financial loss, although some of them have their triumph through survival in repertory.

In our provinces, critics advise but are not able to fill a theater unless the program contains *Swan Lake*. Some provincial critics have a ferocious local reputation; this is a reflection of the area's vacuum: we love Teacher, she's so mean, particularly to all those phonies from foreign parts who are trying to put something over on us. The provinces do not suffer novelty with patience. Poets make the best critics and always have. Baudelaire, Gautier, Mallarmé, Claudel, Cocteau, Yeats, Marianne Moore, Carl Van Vechten, Edwin Denby have written words that transcend reportage and achieve a poetic permanence in fixing the ephemeral. It is the nature of poets to observe closely. Their pleasure in finding words which are equivalents of action, their precise sense of a verbal image related to visual pattern and musical form make their memoirs delightful, even illuminating. But poets do not often make very good journalists, and the more careful they are with their words and ideas, the less likely they are to fulfill the requirements of workaday journalism and the demands of the city-desk. Poets don't write about news in the dance, but the essential residue, if any, that stays in their minds, and in the echoing minds of parts of the public, after an event has ceased to be novelty and becomes history.

Historians of the dance are more archivists than critics; they record but rarely vitalize performance. Most of their researches are simple antiquarianism, useless to choreographers whose business is not archeological gossip but invention. A smug and obedient revivalism is no substitute for a search for new steps nor are documents proof of successful reinterpretation. Except for a few chronicles in the high-brow quarterlies, ballet has been spared that ratiocination

which smothers famous literary figures, substituting free fantasy on themes from Kafka, Joyce, Proust, Melville, James, D. H. Lawrence, etc., for attention to the intention of the authors. Ballet won't stand still long enough to be mauled.

It is sometimes feared that the critical audience or its journalistic voice, issuing snap judgments from which there is no appeal, determines the span of a novelty at its debut. There is infrequent correspondence between what many journalists write at first and what the general public ends up by liking later, if the new work under observation has any genuine claims to invention, newness or originality, which few works ever have. The general amorphous and unconsidering audience ends up by liking, after a certain period of repeated exposure to the novel ballet, (it may take years; the dancers who first made it may have quit the scene), choreography of the greatest internal consistency, vitality and strength of structure. Durability does not depend upon a debut.

Time and *The New Yorker* are so committed to the wise-crack and their idiosyncratic rhetorical tone that their comment on dancing is only news-worthy. This is odd, since the reporting on horse-racing, popular music, architecture, science, even politics have high degrees of professional capacity. Both magazines are famous for the dim visibility of their art-coverage; *The New Yorker* is rather worse, since *Time* makes no bones about its mass-soothing Philistinism. Reports from great cities of the world in *The New Yorker* are written by observers of care and conscience; its critics of painting, sculpture, serious music and the dance are incompetent; that is, they are not equipped with the materials of the craft which they attempt to judge. Their air of smug domestication, the reduction of any unfamiliar sight or sound to patronizing intimacy, dismissal past damnation, is the exact reflection of the style of luxury-advertising copy for which the magazine now chiefly exists. A recent English critic called Stravinsky's last ballet, written at the age of seventy-five, 'experimental.' He was referring to the score; he had not then seen it performed. *Agon* is not an experiment; it is a masterpiece. But this is characteristic: Stravinsky innovated; he must have experimented. He still innovates, hence, he must still 'experiment.' How experimental can you get? Critics who serve the drain of audience apathy are recommended by their own looseness. If there was not this exact equation they would not hold

their jobs, as the mass public can only swallow a drop at a time.[10]

For the last twenty-five years, from a variety of sources—musical comedy, films, television, ballet itself—the general public has been provided with a very eclectic repertory of permissive taste, all the way from revivals of nineteenth century full-evening, triple-length 'classic' monuments to free-form concert-recital 'modern' dances. The general public might not be able to answer a quiz-program based on ballet but one way or another they have seen a lot of it, and neither ice-skating nor modern-dance have won out as popular favorites. Theatrical dancing to most people means the academic classic dance. Ballet, beyond about five couples is quite lost on TV, but it must finally come to terms with popular theater or it can't afford to exist, as its apparatus is so costly to maintain. This was the prime fallacy of the Modern Dance. It thought it was too grand for the gross public. This public is blessed in its ignorance. It no longer expects any fulfillment of a preconceived formula. The special public can be more upset than any other since it feels it knows what is and what is not *the* ballet. The general audience just thinks good ballet is good dancing and is often right.

RUSSIAN BALLET: Formerly, dance-spectacle as organized at the Imperial Czarist courts in Petersburg and Moscow, ca. 1750-1910, founded on French, Italian, Scandinavian and Central European models, but with excellent native specialists starting from ca. 1865. Then, 1909-29, the dance and musical repertory called into being by Serge Diaghilev, the emigré aristocrat and ex-amateur bureaucrat of the Imperial Theater in Petersburg, with overwhelming influence on painting, music and theater in London, Paris and New York. Then, 1930-45, the exploitation in dilution of this repertory by his direct heirs in Europe and America, with notable additions invented

10. When *Agon* was presented by the Royal Ballet in London, compulsively but perfunctorily, with a cast augmented beyond the indications of its composer, *The Times* (August 28, 1958) continued the loyal service of the official press to this master, unaltered through fifty years: ". . . But there are limits to penury of invention if a choreographer is to make a satisfactory pattern of movement. *Agon* represents bankruptcy of melodic invention, which was anyhow never Stravinsky's strong point, disintegration of rhythm, which was once his forte, and collapse of texture, which is his principal interest in musical composition. Mr. MacMillan [the choreographer] has somehow made bricks without straw, a silk purse out of a sow's bristles. . . . It is true that it could have been better played . . . but it would need more rehearsal than the music is worth . . . for the ballet is a total loss."

by his final collaborators. Now, (1925 to the present), the establishment and repertory of the State Academies of the Classic Dance in Leningrad and Moscow, of massive splendor, prowess, efficiency and security but which bear absolutely no effect of the revolutions in music, painting and choreography exercised for our era by Stravinsky (left Russia, 1914); by Picasso (entered Russian collections, ca. 1909 but then unshown for forty years), or by Balanchine (left Russia, 1924). The institution of ballet in Russia presently enjoys the highest political and diplomatic prestige. Foreign statesmen make mandatory visits to the Bolshoi Theater to meet and greet the ballerinas and have their pictures taken, which does not happen at either the opera or drama. Contingents of dancers from the Bolshoi pool are sent east and west as prime examples of Soviet cultural achievement. But the Soviet ballet (and theater), after the fall of Lunacharsky, the first and only (from our standpoint) progressive minister of education, has been cut off from any international advance-guard movements since about 1930. Contemporary Russian taste in the plastic arts, music and architecture is a blank vulgarization of the retrograde official taste of 1890, which was then already provincial, except for small liberal circles in Petersburg, compared even to Rome or Berlin at the same period.

If unlimited government subsidy, social security, a great personnel pool to draw on, political necessity and selfless concentration in administration can accomplish high art, the Soviet ballet can be said to lead the world, nor need it heed the West's strictures that it is also the bald expression of gross style and brutal taste. For purposes of domestic policy, refinement has been of slight use. Character-dancing, as witness the Moiseyev company, is excellent. Long stretches of operatic pantomime are executed with a conviction and detail known nowhere else in the world, except Japan, where the tradition is older, more stylized and far more interesting. To Western eyes there is a heaviness in the women (except for those two stars Europe has been permitted to see) and a lack of imaginative approach which characterizes our own comparative material poverty with all its gentle elegance and intellectual piquancy. The Russians have the real sputnik-style; is it an index of our self-indulgent decadence and general decline?

However, there is evidence that the Russians themselves are not entirely happy with all they do. This has come to light as their com-

panies make foreign tours and are forced to face up to international developments that have proliferated outside the Iron Curtain for the last quarter century, to say nothing of the still active effects of Diaghilev. Under Lunacharsky, who tried to persuade him to return and head the state theaters, the October Revolution stood for the international advance-guard in theater, dance and film. Meyerhold, Goleizovsky and Eisenstein had not yet been immolated. After all, it was not the United States that offered Isadora Duncan, the most famous dance-revolutionist of her era, a state-supported school; it was the Russia of Lenin, who had first hailed her in the days of the 1905 revolution.

We have seen in Russia, Czarist as well as Soviet, that intellectuals and artists were not only expendable but were a recognized danger to crown and state. Experiment was interpreted as obvious insecurity, and the novelty of choice as attack on the normal establishment. Russia had frozen, but long before the epoch of our own Big Freeze. Petrification set in as the taste of the Nineties, before Diaghilev launched his own reforms, when the Imperial theaters were ruled by ex-army officers and all the proprieties preserved for the sake of the puritanical governesses of a Germanophile court. Now, Russia feels the need of showing her dancers to the West, and we have been gladdened by their demonstrations of academic proficiency, political prestige and brio. We have been saddened by the sounds of their new music, and its consequent curse on choreography. However, Russian dancers have seen Western works. It is interesting to read the notices of Balanchine's *Symphony in C* (Bizet, 1947) recently performed in Moscow by the French Opera Ballet, in a version which did not benefit by the restorative powers of its inventor. M. Gabovitch, artistic director of the Bolshoi Theater, writing in *Sovietka Cultura* (June 6, 1958) said "*Le Palais de Cristal* of G. Balanchine had a very great success before the public. I think nevertheless that the development of such a genre is however limited, for finally this might lead to an end in itself, and there is the danger that the classic dance might transform itself purely as a demonstration of technique." This is the orthodox Marxist attack on 'formalism' (art for art's sake); any work must have elementary social-content (as if any work can avoid it, since before everything it must come from *some* society), every work must fulfill an ameliorative social function, like first-aid, or else it is useless or rather, dangerous. Oddly

enough this attitude was attacked by an official Soviet voice. In an article dated July 10, 1958, only a month after the visit of the French company, B. J. Cutler of the New York *Herald Tribune* reported:

> Russia came out today with a real man-bites-dog story: a ballet dancer criticized the state of modern Soviet ballet.
>
> The surprise which this caused came from the position ballet holds in the Soviet Union. It is one artistic field in which Russia excels and its famed Bolshoi ballet has invariably been the Kremlin's most successful cultural ambassador abroad.
>
> The courage to tell proud Russians that all was not well with their ballet was found in Viktorina Kriger, sixty-two, who joined the Bolshoi in 1910, won a Stalin Prize in 1946 and is not in awe of prima ballerinas or producers.
>
> Her indictment was brief. In classic pre-revolutionary ballets such as *Giselle, Swan Lake* and *Don Quixote,* no one can touch the Russians, she said. But the bosses of new Soviet ballet have forgotten one ingredient: dancing.
>
> The outspoken woman took dead aim at *Spartacus,* perhaps the most successful new Soviet ballet. It came well recommended, with music by Aram Khatchaturian and choreography by Igor Moiseyev, whose folk-dance troupe was a sensation in the United States.
>
> Naturally, Mrs. Kriger found no fault in the ballet's ideological line. It tells of a slave uprising in ancient Rome. Spartacus, its gladiator hero was a favorite historical character of Karl Marx, and its theme is thoroughly approved by the Communist party.
>
> But, Mrs. Kriger said, it is a spectacle and not a ballet at all. Its hero does not dance once, and the role could be performed by any dramatic actor with a stately figure and the ability to pantomime.
>
> She said the country has many talented dancers, both male and female, whose active years are passing without the chance really to dance. She added that heavy acting, known here as 'suffering' has taken over ballet.
>
> "When will the ballet dancer dance?" She asked.

FRENCH BALLET: Dance spectacle as performed by the state troupe of the National Academy of Music and Drama at the Grand Opera in Paris, for the last twenty-five years usually under the direction of Serge Lifar, the last premier danseur of Diaghilev, a choreographer

of vast compulsion and few gifts.[11] Visually luxurious in dress-making and scenic decoration, it corresponds to the demands of the Parisian public. A typical manifestation (outside the Opera, but in no way alien to it) was reported by Laura Sheelen in the June-July, 1958 *Dance Observer*:

> In Paris, not all dance is doomed to failure. The French company of Janine Solane enjoyed undisputed success. The afore-mentioned Palais Chaillot [a theater about the size of the New York City Center] was swarming with people and the intended run was extended by popular demand. There was enthusiastic applause, with the adoring audience shouting "Bis, Bis" (Encore, Encore). One could only gasp in amazement as one sumptuous costume outdid another, in all about two hundred. The eyes were assaulted by the color and glitter, and the ears were ravished by some of the best Bach and Vivaldi. The heroine of the extravaganza fully justified the 'richesse' with which she had surrounded herself. Her ego quite eclipsed her company of forty and her passions were limitless. I am sure the more materialistic Americans in the audience were the only persons stunned into quick computations of the fortune invested; for it was impossible to believe the immorality of such an expenditure in the face of the present economic and political crisis which is crippling France. Perhaps only a few embitted foreign dancers, eating sour grapes, labeled this parading of flapping posteriors and amateurish skipping about with distended emotion an artistic treason. . . . . .

Within the Grand Opera, the administration has suffered from the intrusion of a disorderly bureaucracy so that the normal scheduling of consecutive seasons is often rendered problematical by a series of crippling work-stoppages. This only reflects the lack of central authority endemic in France. It is not surprising that no new native ballet-masters have been developed for the Opera, no repertory has been invented which is representative to the degree that French letters, architecture or painting is exportable, while any dancers of promise always feel forced to leave the official house in an attempt to discover some open future. It might be demonstrated that the disorganization of French ballet and the petrifaction of Soviet is the result of state-sponsored bureaus which must always tend towards the

11. Mme. Misia Sert, who originally placed him in the Opera: "Serge, tu es le spectre d'un faune dans l'aprés-midi d'une rose."

mediocre, the weight of historic precedent, bureaucratic tenure and self-perpetuating incompetence. It is the echo of the political matrix rather than individual personnel that are finally to blame.

ENGLISH BALLET: Dance spectacle as performed by the Royal Ballet companies at Covent Garden, London, the leading administrators of which were developed under the Diaghilev aegis or immediate influence. British ballet reflects the present social climate of the Court of St. James; its Royal Patent is no token symbol. At our period in world history, there have been recent petulant attacks on the manipulation of the Crown Establishment, but there is no real general disloyalty to the idea of a need for the dynastic principle. The English predeliction for matriarchy is evident in its great queens from the first Elizabeth, Anne, Victoria, through the second Elizabeth, her able mother, grandmother and her beautiful great grandmother. This is reflected in the management of the Royal Ballet Company, with its Queen, Dame Margot Fonteyn, and its Winston Churchill, Dame Ninette de Valois. The male principle is recognized and admired when manifest, as everywhere else in the world, but is seldom encouraged into reckless independent thought or dashing action.

Correctness of execution, efficiency in administration, devotion to the tradition of the Diaghilev canon; a sweet, moderate graciousness and a heavy load of painted decoration have not encouraged much active competition towards choreographic exuberance or invention. Its most successful repertory has been revivals of the full-evening nineteenth century ballets, or imitations of them, with a strong interest in pantomime in which the English have shone for centuries. *The Sleeping Beauty* alone has had some three hundred performances at its lovely home theater. However, in contemporary British ballet there is slight trace of the fire or ferment present in today's English painting, sculpture, drama or fiction. Today, the richest vein of energy in Britain's plastic arts and literature is an activated protest of a still powerful people against blank political decline. The chief vein of British classic dancing is a discreet homage to feudal echoes clad in occasional borrowings from Parisian chic. Paris has always been a lovely place for a holiday. Good-taste is always a dire threat to progressive policy; this has been widely recognized ever since Diaghilev was enshrined in history, where it is shown how he was the enemy of accepted good-taste as soon as he had found Cocteau to

astonish him. The British firmly believe that the only legitimate bad-taste is Parisian; Italian and U. S. bad-taste are just Bad Taste. The British confuse the Paris of dress-makers with the France of poets and painters. But the London audience naturally gets what it likes. An editorial in *Dance and Dancers* (London, August, 1958) puts it neatly:

> . . . . .by ballet what you really mean are vast companies performing well-worn classics whose music you can hum in your baths and whose stories are so familiar that you don't have to think. . . . . .
>
> There should be a place in every country for small mainly experimental groups. . . .for they have a vital part to play—a part, moreover, which is quite outside the limited terms of reference possessed by the large or State-owned companies. Workshop performances are fine, but there is also a mezzanine between them and the major companies—on this half-landing appear the professional performances of more off-beat works by choreographers tried and trying. . . . . .
>
> London has already done pretty well in discouraging foreign dance visits, with the result that New York City Ballet avoids the place like the plague, American Ballet Theater by-passes us and goes to Ireland, Maurice Bejart's company only appears in Devon, Roland Petit wriggles out of a London engagement to appear in America, the Danes are reluctant to come, etc. etc. . . . . .

Custodial discretion, reinforced by the stupendous financial success of many American tours has placed the Royal Ballet at the pinnacle of local and world prestige, yet at the very instant of its grant of a Royal Charter ensuring its descent as an independent organization, it must find itself at its most problematical period, regarding both repertory and personnel. The resucitation of the distant past is no longer a working policy; the nineteenth century has been sacked of works to revive. The perpetuation of part of the repertory of the first half of the twentieth century has not resulted in a sequence of invention which has added many works to the international repertory. What British ballet could do with is some untidiness, intrusions from underprivileged taste, a sense of legitimate outrage and some red-brick energy. This is not easy to manage in a court-theater by means of a royal company. But maybe there is a public in Britain

that might welcome an Angry Young Man on his way to rouse the Sleeping Princess right out of Windsor Forest.

AMERICAN BALLET: Dance spectacle as performed by native dancers in New York City, through our provinces and the world entire in an international (melting-pot) manner, combining elements of the more suave and acrobatic Russian Imperial and Soviet Academies (the best of our teachers still derive from the Petersburg-Leningrad tradition), with notable additions from jazz, free-form or individual lyric developments, pushed into a sharp, percussive, hard, clean accent, athletic and metrical which seems when exported to South America, Europe or the Orient, heartless, anti-theatrical (i.e. anti-pantomimic), under-clad, ill-decorated and relentlessly ingenious in its insistence on the academic classic dance as a propulsive or compulsive basis. In France it is greeted as *le style Frigidaire,* dismissed as mechanical and dowdy. The British hate it on principle since the dominant American repertory is both against Tradition (except in vocabulary), and has no Establishment. The Russians admit our jazz ballet is all right but think we should leave *Giselle* to them; we should, too. In Japan, critics expressed pity for poor dancers who were forced to fly about the stage with such soulless rapidity in Balanchine's merciless flagellation for every spirit of time-less grace. The sense of time is the heart of the matter, our American sense of time. Mr. Sumio Kam'bayashi, Press and Program Manager of the Tokyo American Cultural Center, distilled the essence of the Japanese ideological conflict with the New York City Ballet's repertory, (April, 1958):

> For the Japanese who are aesthetic (that is, sense-ly) rather than intellectual or volitional, who appreciate more leisurely tempo and less bustling activity, who prefer contemplation to action, etc. (Japanese may be in favor of the first part of the pair of dualisms that follows: introvert-extrovert, aggressive-fatalistic, adagio-allegro). Too much speediness is vulgar. That's why Kabuki (the Japanese traditional classic drama) and even Japanese film move on in a slow tempo. Pauses in which an actor strikes an effective pose are the order of day with our theater. Often you find the slow-speed film technique in Kabuki as pointed out by Eisenstein. This love of stillness, void or *nirvana* is typically Buddhistic Japanese. For such nations as we are, the ballet that moves with

> presto tempo is almost unbearable if you want to watch it emotionally. Many dancers said they wanted the *Swan Lake* [Balanchine version] danced more slowly so that it gives time and room for them to identify themselves emotionally with the dance.

In his conversations with Robert Craft, Stravinsky said:

> I myself have no habit of anything oriental, and especially no measure of time in oriental music. In fact, my attitude resembles that of Henri Michaux: in the Orient I recognize myself as a Barbarian—that excellent word invented by Attic Greeks to designate a people who could not answer them in Attic Greek.

What most people complain of in the dominant American style of classic dancing is our sense of Time, which is often speedier than moderate. The best trained Americans move faster, fill in more steps in a minute to more elaborate and concentrated music than most other Western performers. Also, the dominant American repertory uses music impelling dancers to a density in sharp, silhouetted and plastic action demanding a more attentive eye and ear than previous gentler numbers. The American sense of Time is not static; time does not pass; we pass through it, but we impose on it an active analysis; we break it up for our fun and games, a sometimes insolent imposition on a fourth or fifth dimension. Stravinsky says that portions of *Agon* contain three times as much music for the same clock length as some of his earlier pieces. Hence Balanchine's choreography for it needed to contain an equivalent dosage of choreographic concentrate, requiring much more looking-at than less packed compositions. The sonorous analysis of time, due to possibilities not alone in electronic devices but in researches in serial forms from Schoenberg and Webern through the later Stravinsky, opens up a whole new world in the temporal structure of the classic dance. Balanchine's choreography to Hindemith, Charles Ives and Schoenberg, his interest in Varese and Webern indicates an extension of possibility never closed to the limitless perspectives in the academic dance. The reason that Balanchine has imposed his personal vision on the world of theatrical dancing in our time to the degree that he has stems from his technical interest in and technical mastery of musical form. An analytical study of a score at his piano, often culminating with a personal piano

transcription for rehearsal purposes, starts his choreographic analysis; the oscillation of his interest in certain types of scores and certain clusters of composers tells us much about his method, for it is a logical procedure and corresponds to needs that he senses in the development of his company and his audience at a given period. In a recent season, anticipating export values necessary for an extensive Far Eastern tour, he composed four ballets for American dancers with scores by Vivaldi-Corelli, Gounod, Stravinsky (a commission) and Sousa (a discovery). The fast and sharp music gave the dancers no trouble, but the tender, transparent and gentle modulations of the Gounod symphony were not mastered by his own dancers whom he had over-instructed in a fast percussive beat. He did not have time enough to teach them to dance slowly. Balanchine handles time as some painters, color; for him, time is the plastic definition of movement in its sequence and separation; he requires unfamiliar music, music which has not been too much heard, music devoid of association, with a temporal urgency and strangeness, to be heard newly, at least in the season of its introduction.

The American response to new music is not a question of nationalism; *Billy the Kid* (Copland-Loring-French, 1938) had a charming score based on folk materials. The ballet had success since it was then a popular response to an historical need; but its choreographic value was slight, in few ways equal to Martha Graham's *American Document* from which its processional portions largely derived. It is not Americanism but the American dancer's capacity to utilize music which most nearly corresponds to his unprejudiced energy which makes American ballet as strong as it is, with the American ability to recognize changes in time, sensitive also to relentless mutations in history. Robert Craft writes of Pierre Boulez in the recent Columbia LP recording of *Le Marteau Sans Maître*:

> One of the most difficult items in *Le Marteau* is speed. Whether or not the world is moving more quickly than ever before, fast tempi today are faster than any past period. Boulez's characteristic fast tempo is 208 beats per minute whereas only a generation ago Webern's was 168. . . . . Beethoven begins the race by breaking through the conventional tempos designated by Italian words. He greatly extends the ranges and varies the kinds of tempos and, at the same time, adds new speed. But Beethoven's *allegro molto* is 144 (the "Eroica") and 144 is only *molto moderato* for Boulez.

> In *Le Marteau* speed as a whole, not only the speed of fast movement, is much greater than in any music of any earlier period. . . . Perhaps if the tendency continues we will be able in the future to learn to hear the motor of the hummingbird.

Perhaps one day also we will be able to mark the discrete motion of the hummingbird's wings. Certainly there is no physiological barrier to what American dancers can, properly schooled, manage. The capacity of a good dancer in our corps de ballets today would have amounted to star (technical) capacity thirty years ago. The requirements of the post-Russian Stravinsky repertory have precipitated the increase of automotive efficiency; what could be, or can be, done if there were an all-out effort towards a real crash-program in ballet might be amazing. Most American dancers have some chance at adequate training, but let us assume for a moment that the academic dance was considered a legitimate exercise in the (cultural) defense of our nation by the Congress. Even in a dream, one could not ask for $133,000,000.00 which the newly opened Air Corps Academy in Colorado cost so far. There, some eleven hundred picked young men would be given training which no expense of mind or money could improve. Ballet is not a necessity. If it were, the efficiency in the instruction of dancers, the quality of human material, and the prestige involved, would be, to put it modestly, superior. So much for a social and economic absolute; as far as the physiological absolute, which depends practically on the first two, there seem to be fewer limits here, too, than one might think. Roger Bannister, the young Oxford physician who smashed the four minute mile, said in *Sports Illustrated* for August 18, 1958:

> What is the ultimate in miling? Four minutes was only a milestone with the magical ring of round numbers on the path to a physiological absolute which axiomatically runners will never reach, though they will approach it more closely. Unless there is a process of eugenic selection of athletes—horrible thought—the limit depends on the athlete's ability to transport oxygen to his muscles. Over this distance without oxygen the muscles can no longer be driven by the mind. . . . . A mile in 3 minutes 30 seconds is impossible with the present human physique, but there remains a no man's land of 24.5 seconds. Gradual improvement is inexorable.

Even if it is not welcomed with open arms, even if our dancers

on foreign tours do not always make the residual total impression so nervously hoped for by our State Department, there is no doubt but that from a progressive standpoint, American ballet, even lacking a state or national theater, dominates the epoch. Nor is envy entirely absent when foreign critics speak of the presence of Soul in the home team and its absence in honored guests. Since the dominant American repertory depends upon the most eclectic and advanced musical basis now available, since it has borrowed benefits from the researches and inventions of the greatest contemporary specialists in new rhythms, new harmonies, new balances of form in sound; and since we materially deprive ourselves in the departments of dress-making and decoration, our choreographers have had a wrenching of their imaginations to disassociate themselves from the expected, the easy or the merely decorative. We have a rich local vein of character-dancing in popular music and dance forms, which has contributed one master-mason in Jerome Robbins. The basic beat in jazz is perpetually liberating, not alone through syncopation, but from the ingenuity in the improvisational style of its reversible rhythm. Seemingly invented out of nothing, it embodies the exuberance of virtuoso playfullness. The style is hard to dry out because our popular music changes seasonally with a new hem-line or a waist-line. It keeps us, literally Up On Our Toes.

The American Style is disciplined but irreverent. Since we have no mythic national gallery to which we must always pay homage and no prototypes but the dubious heroes of Pioneer, Mechanic and Athlete, we are not bound by servitude to a sacred past, either personalities or sacred monstrous works. Everything we do is done to be done again and again, invented each time new, with new gags. This breeziness may seem brash to older communities, but mark how blue-jeans have conquered the world. What we dig is a new and fancy sharpness. We appear to the rest of the world exasperatingly capable of anything, good and bad. But there are not any paths of invention or range of performance that our home-grown dancers of energy and determination find shut to them. This now happens to be untrue anywhere else in the world.

ARGENTINE, AUSTRALIAN, DANISH, DUTCH, SWEDISH and SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET: The problem of the provinces is delicate. Possibly it should never be mentioned, but there is activity in the field in

many remote parts of the world, each place bidding for its quota of prestige and getting it. The Danes have a moderately interesting history, but it is no absolute service to their modest excellences to overexaggerate it. Dancing-masters in Scandinavia did influence the Imperial Russian schools in the last century, but Bournonville was no Petipa, no Ivanov. Canadian, South African and Australian dancers have become valuable members of the Royal Ballet and American companies, which proves the point: provinces are interesting for what they can contribute to capitals. Mr. Anatole Chujoy has written a valuable monograph on "Civic Ballet" which he has done much to foster:

> National Ballet Festivals were held in Canada every year for six years until 1955. They were discontinued for a very interesting reason: most of the talented dancers in the non-professional companies, which participated in the festivals were absorbed by the then newly established Canadian professional companies, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada, and the television programs originating in Toronto and Montreal.

Provincial ballet-directors are always being betrayed in their selfless efforts to bring national or local companies into being, for their best dancers will always be picked off by bigger companies. The smaller troupe at its best, is usually in a state of hopeful evolution, interesting to those responsible, and to a very small, if passionate, portion of the local public, which is always dismayed that there is less energy for money in them than, for example, in the art-museum or symphony orchestra. The art-museum often has an endowment, and objects of known value; the orchestra plays a repertory of famous works; the ballet has neither. To persist, the managers of provincial companies must always ignore the true state of their place's history, geography and economy. When one is building a South African, a Canadian or an Atlanta, Georgia company, one can have no patience with the historian who tells you it can't be done, or that everything done here derives from centers far away, and everything good developed here will revert to those centers. It can, too, be done; we are doing it. More power to you. You are doing part of our work for the rest of us, and even if we are not very grateful you may find your names in the histories. But you are in the education business, not in the theater business, and if you doubt it, ask any of your dancers

where they would rather perform: Vancouver or Covent Garden? There are local excellences, local strengths, in some cases gifts and resources, even superior to those sometimes enjoyed in the big gardens of culture. We can admire the devotion, envy the fun, smile at the smugness and forgive the innocence, hope and heart break. But, except for practical training of dancers and choreographers who will do their best work in some larger town, the prognosis is limited. Auden wrote of the Portuguese colony of Macao:

> A weed from Catholic Europe, it took root
> Between the yellow mountains and the sea,
> And bore these gay stone houses like a fruit,
> And grew on China imperceptibly . . . . .
>
> Religious clocks will strike; the childish vices
> Will safeguard the low virtues of the child;
> And nothing serious can happen here.

MODERN DANCE: A loose idiom of idiosyncratic, free-form movement, identified with careers and contributions of half a dozen individuals, all in their prime by 1935, when their loose connection (there was no formal association) represented an unorthodox attack on the academic classic ballet as it was then known (or unknown) in the United States and Central Europe. Its chief inspirer was the Californian, Isadora Duncan at the turn of the century and the following decade; while Jaques Dalcroze, a Swiss musical theorist, seemed to provide an anti-academic, as well as anti-theatrical body of instruction in measure and rhythm. His big point was that the Russian dancers of the Diaghilev company could not 'keep time' to their music. He was interested in theater if it was in the open air. Rudolf Laban, a Hungarian theorist, was even more puritanically anti-theatrical. Most modern dancers had strong ethical objections to the over-decoration of stage dancing, some of which was salutory, but much of which was a rationalization since they developed outside official theatrical institutions and had neither home base nor localized public.

Martha Graham, like her historic ancestors Loie Fuller, Isadora and Ruth St. Denis, is in a different category. Acclaimed over the world as America's leading 'modern' dancer, her method is hailed

both as justification and salvation for the Modern Dance as a legitimate, legible and transmittable vocabulary. This is neither fair to a remarkable personality nor accurate as apologia for a movement. Graham is an exceptional artist, not comparable to Isadora, because Isadora had only the rudiments of training. She didn't need any for what she actually danced. She was an improviser of great personal magnetism who arrived at that moment in history when there was a corset around every woman in the West, aching to be thrown off. Isadora robed herself in the three-century old prestige of Hellenistic sculpture and the century old repertory of German symphonic band music. Swept in on a healthy breath of California poppies, her performance was a danced sermon with Whitman as gospel. Her influence was ethical and social rather than theatrical.

Graham is an accomplished and meticulous artist who served a long and arduous apprenticeship in eclectic presentations of the dances of Spain and the Orient, including enough classic ballet to have respect for it as a training aid. Graham's mistress was Ruth St. Denis, who as anybody who has read her fascinating autobiography knows, is a creature of enormous appetite and intelligence, an impressive historic figure. With nothing at hand to borrow from, she filled an epoch in the American theatre, bringing the idea of Dance, as well as American Dance, to more lands than Duncan ever knew. Her instinctive passion for the East, her later knowledge of it from first hand, made her evocations and her evocativeness in the minds of the young dancers like Graham, an experience far livelier for them than the Diaghilev Ballet. Ruth St. Denis knew theatre from vaudeville, variety and from what Ted Shawn called "A Thousand and One Night Stands."

Graham is also the professional, outside the descent of the academic tradition, but she has contributed to it in a variety of openings-up, even as Isadora did more ambiguously. What is more important, she has been exactly right for herself, possibly for herself alone. She has a consummate analytical gift for expressing her particular intensity. Her face and form are not what they are by any chance. She worked for them, and they show it. But just as there was little in precedent to promise her, there is not much that directly descends from her. One has only to see her own well trained young dancers in those rôles she first created for herself. Not that she lacks choreographic talent for pattern, gesture or oddity. Simply, she has

analyzed her own assets and their place in our present; what she decided to do corresponded with what she felt she could do plus what needed to be done; her repertory was both self-assertion and oblique critique. There was only herself to do it; this was what she was born for, just as Isadora and St. Denis had their call and saw their light. You never had to ask Martha Graham who she thought *she* was. She was Martha, and she did dances for and around Martha, and they have been of lasting interest around the world.[12]

As an original, one of the rare ones, what is evident as her personal tone refers only to herself and its theatrical framing; this limitation she has embraced and used as strength. That she is the only contemporary figure outside the academic dance to be able to do this demonstrates her intensity as well as the wide uses of the academic traditions, beyond which she alone found a unique path. *Herodiade* is the name of one of her famous dances, based on Mallarmé's poem. Years before Graham, Yeats had written words which also apply to her:

> Yet I am certain that there was something in myself compelling me to attempt creation of an art as separate from everything heterogenous and casual, from all character and circumstance, as some Herodiade of our theatre, dancing seemingly alone in her narrow moving luminous circle.

But lacking other equally powerful personalities, the Modern Dance *soi-disant* produced no second generation of performers of intensity, little repertory disassociated from first-performances and no extensible code of movement. While there were flashes, or fragments of spiritual grandeur of some depth if extreme narrowness, the future of Modern Dance either as program or philosophy is obscure. What

12. Stark Young, perhaps the most sensitive and exact critic of theater-as-a whole who has ever written in America, said of Graham:

"There are times when the Graham programme or some number in it seems too long. If you have full faith in the dancer you get an unpleasant sense that, with so much given to it, more must be being said than you are taking in; a sense of inadequacy of perception is laid on you as it were. There are times, too, when the motif and the effect seems overpresented, and you are reminded of Talleyrand's remark that whatever is exaggerated is insignificant. And we may have found not too infrequently an evasion of the dramatic, a concentration on the stark pattern for the design-idea of the composition. The benefits of this—for a period of time, that is—are manifest in the fine cleanness and purity of her dancing. We have the sense that, no matter what has been left out, nothing has entered a composition that has not grown into it organically. . . ." (*Immortal Shadows: A Book of Dramatic Criticism*)

was most legible or negotiable of its thesis moved into the field of physical education in state-colleges, replacing gymnastics, or into musical-comedy dance-numbers where it instilled a little life of no greater importance than the vehicles it adorned. On Broadway it is dilute and serves as a base for an embroidery of jazz-character steps.

BALLET MUSIC: Skipping the long history of what past music has accompanied what lost dances, it is important to analyze what present music may serve us. Not everything available is suitable. Even the convinced preference of a certain choreographer for a chosen composer is no guarantee of sensibility. The most important thing to consider, if one works for a company with a musical conscience, is the size and quality of the available orchestra. How many men can you afford to pay to play those pieces you have chosen to use as your dancing-floor?

In the 1930s there was a vulgar tendency to seize large scores, the symphonies of Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, Tschaikovsky and Shostakovitch. The strength of the orchestras playing these pieces often bore little resemblance to the indications on the partition. The public, then a rather rudimentary audience without benefit of high fidelity radio stations or the LP record, was sufficiently familiar with the Pastoral, the Pathetic and the Fantastic, to bring them along half-memorized, to the theater. The attending choreography was naive, too. A first statement was proposed by a solo dancer; the corps chimed in at the tutti and pre-tenderized ears guided innocent eyes to fill up all the blank bars with partial correspondences in a musical visualization. It is not by accident that none of these works are any longer in repertory. Their interest was exhausted due to the over-familiarity of their music. And it is now far too expensive to employ on casual circuits the apparatus of the German state theaters where one hundred and ten men were the normal post-Wagnerian requirement. Approximation of Richard Strauss, and of Wagner himself, on a reduced scale, particularly if the pieces have acquired fame in the absolute symphonic repertory, were for a while acceptable; but today, in large part due to the greatly expanded service of the recording industry, the audience is better educated in their realistic demands for a scale of sonority fulfilling the original intentions of composers. A state-supported opera house is needed to maintain a great

orchestra, which even reduced to fifty plus men, on the union scale must always cost more weekly than the total group of dancers.

Increasingly for us, the modesty of the orchestra's size determines a selection of music, but here economic necessity is not censorship. On the simplest restriction, there is a large catalogue of string-music, and in a variety of other combinations whose balance, scale and scope is suitable for dance. A clever choreographer gains piquancy by uncovering scores with unexpected provenance in divisions which can be incorporated within the body of an orchestra at his disposal. A ballet is launched by the choice of its music far more than any pretext of plot, libretto or literary idea. Music determines dances more than any single element. Naturally the choreographer must do things with it or to it. His analysis, his measurings, not in formal structure alone, but on the floor of its atmosphere, its charm or lack of charm, determines his range of gesture or motion and tells the most, at the same time about the nature of his own gifts.

The most able ballet masters are not those necessarily who are most prodigal of invention, or those who are compelled to attempt an approximate dancer's equivalent for every musical concept. Sometimes, even in the most propelling or suggestive music, too much goes on for its own accommodation. If some absolute consistency was forced equating entries and reëntries, restatements, variations and reversals, the visual part might collapse from the pressure of the aural. Synthesis of music and movement is what commands taste and ingenuity. When Balanchine was making *Jeux de Cartes* (1937), he found an ingenious device in which the pack unfolded itself in fan-like conformations, from the suite King, Queen, Jack, etc., held in a poker hand. He made the dancers vary the sequence three times, each totally different. Stravinsky, with the parsimony of experience, told him simply to repeat the first one unchanged three times: "They won't see it the first, nor applaud till the third."

Concepts of time in rhythmic divisions are the base of any truly contemporary dance-style. Pastiche is unsatisfactory, however nostalgic, because it only recalls and is neither superior to nor the equal of an original model. Stravinsky's method of revival is resuscitation through metamorphic transformation. It was the score of *Apollon Musagète* (1928) which made us listen anew to Delibes as a serious composer of dance-music. A general acceleration of incident and accident all over the world in the last sixty years has generally

found its prophecy in Western music. Stravinsky marks the beginning of musical thinking which determined a new idea of dancing based neither on poetry nor painting but on analytical sonority and rhythmic play. He has led dancers since 1909; only those who follow him closely have been able to extend the repertory by amplifying the academic classic vocabulary. This is not to say that he has written the only dance scores of use or interest, but it is to insist that his initial contributions to the twenty Diaghilev seasons, and his masterpieces over the most recent thirty have affected every aspect of theatrical music as the seminal influence. What is remarkable still is that he can even presently, after half a century's history arouse consistently strong differences of opinion. His gifts are medicinal; his invention has the pungency of fresh iodine and the impersonal freshness of clean linen sheets. His atmosphere has the astringency and dis-comfort of certain therapies. His music has massaged the body of the dance; he offers super-sonic devices against arthritic choreographers, and an accumulation of calcium on passive hearing or snobbish seeing. On November 9, 1913, Claude Debussy wrote to Stravinsky to thank him for the score of *Le Sacre du Printemps*:

> For me, who descends the other slope of the hill but keep, however, an intense passion for music, for me it is a special satisfaction to tell you how much you have enlarged the boundaries of the permissable in the empire of sound.

The problem of musical taste, the choice of one piece of music rather than another upon which it is prudent to risk dancing forms the principal policy-decision of ballet management. Often accident seems the best policy. A choreographer, seldom a trained musician, is permitted to choose something he happens to have heard and liked and blandly proceeds. Or there are instances when vague outside pressures, overheard in conversations of critics and connoisseurs insist that some contemporary composer demands to be commissioned. When this happens on the basis of prestige rather than preference, the result has its compulsive nervousness in composition. Fulfillment is achieved only by conviction and collaboration. The streets of choreography's hell are paved with paid-for scores which though produced were unproducible.

People refused to take Balanchine seriously when he said of the music of John Philip Sousa: "I like to listen to it." Stravinsky makes

a distinction between hearers of and listeners to music. Similarly, in the dance, a difference may be drawn between those who watch it and those who see it. Some choreographers have an instinctive awareness of sights and sounds, but their gifts, unclarified by analytical intelligence, are not sufficiently powerful to precipitate vague feeling into formal passion. This betrays basic lack of energy, for the schooling necessary is available if a mind is willing to be as rigorously exercised as a body. Listening to music systematically is in itself training; not just attending haphazard concerts, but the subjection of the ear to considerable sequences of many composers' products. In our times we have seen poets and musicians of the advance-guard swarm back to scores by Tschaikowsky and Puccini, two names proscribed in Paris at one time (although never by Diaghilev, who died singing *Butterfly*). Catholic taste and an eclectic policy are matters of discrimination rather than promiscuity. It is not by accident that Balanchine has done three works by Georges Bizet and two by Emmanuel Chabrier, although their music had not been previously considered promising for ballet.

It is not alone the choice of a score for its own unique quality that should be wholly determining, but also the choice of a piece in relation to all others against which it will be shown in combination in a given repertory. Choice is, or at least should be in order to serve and survive, something governed by necessity. We have the pieces we need to open an evening, and while it stretches analogy to think of every program as a menu, there are certainly soup as well as salad ballets. There are hors d'oeuvres, second courses and deserts. Some, like melon, can serve as a first-course, too, but at banquets we won't start with the beef. Surprise, re-freshness, re-creation are prime ingredients. It is not that our palate is jaded; it is seldom very profoundly stimulated. Our ears have heard some sounds so often that they are no more alive to them than our bodies to the chairs we sit in. An energetic choreographer must uncover new noises by old composers and even commission new noises by new composers. This last is tricky, expensive and comes off about one time in ten, but the attempt must never be abandoned, even though chances of even a semi-permanent success are slim.

Part of the trouble lies with the commissioning choreographer. He chooses a composer, not for what this craftsman can finally make but for the purpose of getting a new piece formularized as much

as possible like scores which have already been proven. New noises, new rhythms, new suggestions do not in themselves attract him. The choreographer naturally wants a hit; a hit is a ballet by Tschaikowsky. The trouble with Stravinsky's masterful suite of ballets is that they are all by him, including the one dedicated to Tschaikowsky. By trouble one means the trouble that must be taken by a ballet-master to find choreographic treatment worthy of scores of such savor, expertness and so much mystery. Cocteau, in the finale of his letter to Jacques Maritain, speaks of it best:

> In 1916, Satie was our schoolmaster. From the year 1923 we heard Stravinsky speaking our language better than we. The lack of appreciation he enjoyed in this new period proves to what point our language is disdained.
>
> *The Critics*: "Mr. Stravinsky discovers the classics."
>
> *Stravinsky*: "Exactly. I knew them; I knew them as you did; I had not discovered them."

Of course Cocteau meant discovered, uncovered from long neglect and recovered, through his own gifts of devination and composition.

It is difficult for musicians to know what is grateful for dancers to do. Few are interested in theater; their business is the orchestra. Whatever a choreographer does it can never be the complete answer to a musician's notion, since, even though he may be vague about movement, he knows what he would wish by way of dynamics and emphasis, while the choreographer, quite possibly will have wholly other feelings. It can't hurt a composer to know something about dancing, any more than it hurts a dancer to read music, and to know not alone counts, beat and tune, but what is actually being played in all its wholeness. It is more important that the choreographer know what he really wants in relation to what he can reasonably expect to get from a given talent. It is not always the composer's fault if the delivered score is useless. Maybe he did to the best of his ability what he thought he had been asked to do. When done, it did not correspond to what the choreographer had loosely imagined he had wanted. Neither Tschaikowsky nor Stravinsky had any failures in the great music they have showered on us, although their thoughtless choreographers have had many. To be sure, at the outset, *Swan Lake* was considered a Wagnerian disaster, *Nutcracker* a hodge-podge of

opera-dances and *Le Sacre du Printemps* a madman's joke. You-can't-do-this-to-us is the accolade with which most great and many good new works are kissed, but debuts don't count. Scores survive, and if not for the stage, for which they may be too interesting, then like *Le Sacre,* for the concert-hall.

One way to have a final failure, although sometimes a quick hit, is to make parody music in which the composer conspires with the choreographer to flatter the public by making noises they already know, at the same time poking sly fun both at audience and at the original source of the material. The parody score, derived from the French *musiquette* of the 1920s has all the predigested sophistication of a book-club or record-library choice. You have seen or heard it all before.

BALLET SCENERY: The suggestion and adornment of space and atmosphere in which dancing happens. Ballet is a repertory operation; few theaters in the United States, even opera-houses, have much storage space. Most ballet scenery is soft, painted on large cloths, to be rolled and folded. Heavily built, solid practicable pieces are hard to move and stack. We dislike intermissions over fifteen minutes, for they break the flow of an evening. While the nineteenth century theater of illusion contained platforms, traps, aerial ballets on wire, simulations of fountains, oceans, fireworks, volcanic eruptions, forest fires and earthquakes, our minimal dance spectacle in the mid twentieth century is, comparatively, a tame affair, depending mainly on dancing, except in Russia. The Bolshoi still enjoys a maximum theatrical apparatus but their aesthetic is still that of a century ago. As possibilities for stage scenery in the West have shrunk due to the cost of union labor, real-estate, shifting taste and an accelerated sense of time altered by the scope of spectacle in wide-screen films, a consequent spareness has favored dancers. Our audience would rather watch dancers move than wait while scenery is shifted. Hence, ballet scenery has become the most naive mechanism for big scale spectacle, usually consisting of a back-drop with side wings.

In the seventeenth century when painted moveable scenery started to be hung in designed theaters rather than transformed ballrooms, the aim was, by simulation of grand architectural or natural elements, to imitate an enclosed heroic space, gigantic, symmetrical and metamorphic. An enchantress's palace transformed itself before

your eyes by having hauled up stretched, painted and cut canvas, int
a subterranean dungeon which burned away into the splendor o
glorious sunbursts. The dancing itself must have been far less amusin
than the parade of such tableaux. The language of the dance wa
then comparatively undeveloped, but perspective illusionism was ex
tremely sophisticated.

In the eighteenth century, frontal symmetry having been some
what exhausted, there entered freer devices of forced and steeply
precipitated vanishing points. Asymmetrical collonades replaced
blocked twin corridors, and were pushed off-center to a deep apex
Columns were bent, enfiladed pillars warped and divided into
visual syncopation of modules, suggesting an increase of movemen
even in static paint. Vaguer spaces were suggested, triangular rathe
than cubed, and the stage-floor triangle, since it corresponded t
the actual working area dancers used had more possibility for legi
bility and packed movement. Exotic archeology, Babylon and Peru
Ceylon and Muscovy, Martinique and Morocco, every sort of fan
tastic geography offered stupendous backgrounds against which regi
ments of dancers and figurants defiled.

Stage illumination was rudimentary. Oil lamps with reflector
gave way to gaslight. At the turn of the last century electricity begar
to be controlled. Paint was primarily illusionistic, like an architect'
dead rendering. It strained to re-present literal imitations on plan
canvas surfaces of the look of woodgrain, marble, tapestry, water
sky, with unchanging shadows from a single source of light, creatin
a papery plasticity, put in with a straight-edge, always illogical i
some detail and under most light.

When Diaghilev became attached to the Imperial Theater, th
tradition of scene-painting (designers not infrequently were th
painters themselves) was inherited from the Franco-Italian opera
houses. Foliage, cut leaf-borders on netted drops were broad in yard
age but small in scale and photographic in detail. A painstaking liter
alistic naturalism was the rule. He brought with him to Paris tw
gifted designers, Bakst and Benois, and these took advantage of
revolution in rendering that had already been accomplished by th
Post-Impressionist easel-painters. Broken color of Seurat and Signac
the daring chromatic contrasts and broad generalized vibrating area
of Bonnard and Vuillard and the forced night-illumination of Lautre
and Degas, who had instructed themselves in theaters and circuses

made the great cloths of the first seasons of the Ballets Russes an important revolution in visual taste.

The bravura brushwork in Delacroix, Courbet and Manet had not touched the stage-decoration of their epoch, but by 1905, later researches in palette intensity, poster-display and electricity had already triumphed. Essentially, Bakst and Benois were pasticheurs of taste, in love with an historic past, period by period, which they reconstructed on documents from the archeologists of their time with the broad effects of contemporary paint-handling. When Diaghilev became finally acclimatized to international Paris, which took him some five years, he was able to proclaim far more daring steps in the aims of stage-decoration for the non-realistic or lyric theater. At the start he was satisfied to use his professional theater designers, who had hoped to be, but who were certainly not, primarily easel-painters. While the early Cubists, Picasso, Matisse, Gleizes, the Post-Impressionists and Fauves were available to him by 1909, as well as independent lyricists like Modigliani, Dufy, and Pascin, he was then not thinking in these terms. It was still the epoch of exportable Russian nationalism: Golovin, Korovin and Roerich. It remained for Jean Cocteau to carry the painters of the School of Paris to the theater in the collaboration of *Parade* (Satie-Picasso-Cocteau, 1917). This was, so far, the single most influential manifestation of modernity in the century. It proposed, through splintered facets of Cubism, American rag-time and the journalism of megalopolis, aspects of that permanent 'modern life' of great cities which Baudelaire first found in Constantin Guys, but which the lyric theater had rarely ever employed with so frank and full an apparatus of painter's eyes and poet's vision.

In many cases, Diaghilev's late decor was accidental, insistent and had little to do with dancing. Scenery was often more striking than choreography and it needed have only the slightest relation to music. Stravinsky complains of Matisse's decor for *Le Rossignol* (Balanchine, 1926). "Diaghilev hoped Matisse would do something very Chinese and charming. All he did, however, was to copy the China of the shops in the Rue de la Boetie." Braque and Juan Gris were easel-painters too preoccupied with their personal plastic studies to take stage-decoration seriously, and Diaghilev himself leaned to a slapdash execution as a violent shift from the early over-meticulous detail and pinched scale of the official styles. Some of the painters

used their stage-space as a kind of laboratory, but these were rarely decorators. At its period of greatest importance to him, Diaghilev thought of scenery as enormously enlarged sketches, never carried too far, more often than not seeming to be slight and unstudied but actually executed with fantastic virtuosity by Prince Schervachidze. Part of their piquancy came from the huge area of their playfullness, their apparent lack of serious intent. Picasso threw ingenious devices into the arena and his caprice was always the most monumental. These were tremendous one-man shows, or rather one-tableau (or two, or three) poster-like demonstrations which announced the next big exposition of a new period of the easel-pictures. André Derain, a painter of less depth than some of his colleagues, was, nevertheless, perhaps the most brilliant of the decorators, for he filled his space with a consistent painterly richness, the paint itself appetizing and luxurious, a glow of vast visual luxury on a human scale.

The Diaghilev repertory which enjoyed the most brilliant painting was not the strongest in terms of the dance. As an example, *Le Tricorne* (Falla-Massine-Picasso, 1919) has had numerous revivals due perhaps more to musician and decorator than choreography. Picasso and Matisse pinch hit for a large corps de ballet; the Diaghilev seasons launched the international success of many of the most expensive artists of our time.

Today, except in those companies which are still under the shade of Diaghilev's formula without enjoying the distinction of his collaborations, painted cloths are recognized to have many disadvantages. Contemporary conceptions of space are not entirely satisfied by boxing in a stage floor with static paint, however atmospheric, dashing or suggestive. The broadness of an easel-painter's sketch blown up to the scale of a proscenium opening must be coarse to be legible. Huge sketches were astonishing when they took the place of naturalistic drops, but the scale of the dancers was dwarfed by the very imitation of broad brush strokes. Today we desire, with our most progressive choreography, the form and light which enhance the three-dimensional plasticity of bodies in motion. To serve as foils to dancers we sometimes need objects as real as they are, unveiled in their own air, lit in their own light, not a simulated one. The decor that Gabo and Pevsner constructed in oilcloth and mica for *La Chatte* (Sauget-Balanchine, 1927) and the objects sculptured by Joan Miro for *Jeux d'Enfants* (Bizet-Massine, 1932) were among

the first statements of detached forms which framed dancers by their architectural shape. The big shift in the scenery of our day has been the change of emphasis from paint and color to form and light.

Instead of providing a flat surface with indications upon it which could be read as three-dimensional, veritable three-dimensional objects were presented as light-traps, as facetted or curved surfaces upon which light was bounced or absorbed. Great changes came with the possibilities of the incandescent bulb, and our engineers have by no means finished with the enormous facilities offered by new kinds of light, its pre-setting, monitoring and the subtlety of an organ-like play in delicate balance of circuits in series. The American dancer, Loie Fuller had her own small experimental theater in the Paris Exposition of 1900 (which she shared with the first Japanese classical dancer to appear in the West). She took full advantage of the most recent inventions of Thomas A. Edison by strapping poles to her forearms upon which were hung huge wings of china-silk. These she waved and turned, and the light hitting them seemed like fire, water, petals or clouds under the shifting lamps. The movement of her veils in air, under light made more of a dance than her feet, but something of the Tiffany Glass incandescence of her act has been caught in Toulouse-Lautrec's lithograph.[13]

The painter Pavel Tchelitchev, in the ballet *Ode* (Nabokov-Massine, 1928) used a great range of visual devices for creating spacious air on stage with no pigment, only forms in light. He forced perspective by hanging rows of puppets, diminishing in size which merged with real dancers identically dressed; there was back-projection of cinema film, and a cat's cradle of ropes which made a variety of metamorphic vanishing points. Dancers became self-lit sculptural units; sometimes immobile when confused with the inanimate dolls, at others active, with their mobility enhanced by the mysterious opposition of live and dead; the principle unifying element was light. Later, Tchelitchev proposed a further step in increased plasticity: scenery was not to be any longer a lit surface but rather, in itself, the source of its own illumination. With the development of plastics

13. "A large American woman, rather ugly and bespectacled, standing on a transparent trap-door, uses rods to manoeuvre oceans of light veiling, and sober, active and invisible like a hornet in a flower, she stirs up the orchid of light and fabric which billows out, flares up, opens, roars, turns and floats, changing shape like clay in a potter's hands, twisted in the air under the sign of the torch and the hair. . . ." (Cocteau: *Paris Album*: *Portraits Souvenirs*)

which were weightless or nearly so and could be moulded into any shape, lamps could be placed on dimmers inside sculptured forms. The dancer's energy, action and dynamics illuminated his or her body; Tchelitchev wished his forms that framed them to be in a parallel self-illumination. Paint laid on, no matter how close the brush-strokes imitated the sketches of a painter, or however well lit the canvas might be, was finally static and hence dead. Light itself, vibrating in and on changing forms, had the fluency of motion. In subsequent productions, notably *Errante* (Schubert-Balanchine, 1933) and *Ondine* (Giraudoux-Jouvet, 1937) he pushed the principle of self-illumination further than it has ever been seen before or since. He made that influential part of the public which first recognizes innovation and remembers it longest impatient with the passivity of painted drops. The beautiful flow of the silk act-curtain for Noguchi's *Orpheus* (Stravinsky-Balanchine, 1947) was first seen in the finale of *Errante*.

Today, wherever the prime interest in ballet is dancing, choreography, its investment by performers, and neither pantomime, interior-decoration nor dress-making; the desideratum in decor is absolute plasticity. Bodies are robed in light to proclaim their three-dimensional properties. Paint on cloth can be lit and back-lit in a great range of color and atmosphere, but the plane basis is fixed. Luminescence, however, faced on an impalpable cyclorama plays back and around moving dancers and gilds their shifting silhouettes with the most legible accents and highlights.

Among the important inventions of Martha Graham are her stage-settings, which in spirit recall the mastery of scale, substance and plastic pruning of Japanese gardens, where shrubs, stones, moss and gravel make a mosaic of real objects, sometimes delimiting a landscape and at once enlarging it infinitely by the most subtle alterations of exact placement and diminutive scale. Her most notable designer has been Isamu Noguchi, a distinguished sculptor of Japanese tradition who has moulded and constructed separate objects of considerable size and complexity helping to order her space-forming doors, beds, frames, grills, trees, through and in which she weaves her movement and fixes her important gesture. The objects themselves are keys to her mysteries, opening up action. Painting, unless it is tapestry, has to be translated into other terms of form; sculpture is form itself.

Ballet is about dancing and scenery can help when it does not smother. There are not, however, many ballets of primary choreographic interest which could not get along quite well without much more decoration than is seen at a circus, where the great width of space is contained by tied lines, wires and nets of the trapeze, bars of the cages, the platforms and pedestals for man and beast. These linear divisions are real lines in continuous space. Everything is subordinate to the action of acrobats and animals, and dancers in their genre, have the same athletic physicality; they are the greatest race of big cats and are best viewed when naked.

Ballet-scenery requires far greater tact in design and discipline in the designer than opera or dramatic decoration. Songs are to be sung with a necessarily static delivery and can be launched before splendid surfaces. The movement in the control and release of breath and voice can be made the more thrilling from the depth and richness of the launching-site. Plays happen in a certain space and special time; period and locality must be proposed or suggested. Dancing happens in general space, in its own intense time, whatever the pretext of incident that can be imposed on movement. Space is passive, ready to be stamped and filled with the impress of bodies. A perfume of light and, even sometimes painting, is an aid but the best space is that in which the dancers move freest without being pinned on a grid of dead outlines, obtrusive shapes or insistent masses of unchanging color.

WHAT IS BALLET ABOUT: How does the audience feel about it? Is ballet about music? Must the steps danced be a literal transcription of music played? Is it indeed possible, even if it were desirable, to equate the filling of ears with sights or eyes with sounds?

Is ballet about scenery and costumes? When a performance is all but forgotten from its first impact, is it the scenic investiture that salvages the most vivid memory?

Is ballet about star-performance? When we recall a single dancer, fixed in light, approaching the super-normal through personal domination, grace or physical capacity, is this disassociated from every other theatrical element? If so, how often can we count on it to happen? How much has it to do with the temperament or soul of an artist, or with what the performer has been given by way of tradition, training or design?

Is ballet about choreography? Is the chief interest a maze ordered movement which is woven for and by the dancers?

Ballet is, of course, about all these in varying degrees of i portance at different periods of history, or at different moments the same evening, but it is about one thing constantly, supremely the despair of every scene-painter who attempted to compete w a choreographer, despite the music which is the base of the busin and at the expense of the choreography which is exhaustable af two seasons or five or twenty-five; for just as opera depends on so alone and its singing by a singer, as the spoken drama upon wo embodied by players, so does ballet depend upon dance, the danc dancing whatever is calculated to raise public and performer to so transitory terrestrial paradise. Ballet is about dancing in time.

DANCE PERSPECTIVES 2

LEV IVANOV

by YURI SLONIMSKY

Translated and edited with additional biographical material from Russian sources

by ANATOLE CHUJOY

To be published: March 1959